

Holding Flames

Women Illuminating Knowledge of s/Self Transformation

by

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Abstract

Women's knowledge of the multi-local, participatory and indigenous nature of s/Self transformation is made visible through artful inquiry. These understandings of what women are transforming from and toward leads to radical implications for more transformative psychotherapies, therapist education and community change. This work, inspired by illuminated manuscripts, uses an artful heuristic approach, drawing initially on a public art installation of thirty-six lanterns, each embodying a woman's personal journey of self-transformation. The researcher's personal art installations and indigenous artful imagery emerging from this exhibit, acknowledge art as an integral way of knowing. Art is the matrix for holding a diversity of literatures and knowledges in transdisciplinary dialogue. These include transformative learning, psychotherapy and trauma theory, critical theory, womens' ways of knowing, indigenous knowledges, ecology, cosmology, and artful heuristic inquiry. From these is proposed a participatory and multi-local understanding of self that is fluid, continually co-constituting and deeply relational, transforming ecologically in multiple locations of person, family, community, peoples, and place. The metaphors of trauma, oppression and colonization are used to explore and suggest ways of envisioning and changing problematic holding patterns of self at multiple levels of context. Women's knowledge of s/Self transformation is then applied and exemplified in intertwining transformative projects that are multi-local, participatory and fostering indigenous awareness of body, peoples and place.

Acknowledgements

Without the courage, vision and creativity of the women who made lanterns for the Holding Flames Exhibit, this work would not exist.

My committee has supported the project even before those beginnings. Bonnie Burstow's capacity for creative risk taking, her commitment to women's health and her encyclopedic knowledge of ethics made the Exhibit viable as part of academic knowledge. Ardra Cole, as a pioneer in arts-informed research and as the sort of doctoral advisor who said, "Make space for the art," has fostered the lanterns project from its conceptual beginnings to its full emergence with tender respect for my self-direction. Njoki Wane is not only expert in issues of colonization of body/mind/spirit but she practices decolonization in every aspect of her support for academic work.

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Note: All photographs and drawings are by Eimear O'Neill with the following exceptions: Shadows Cast and Light Trails, photographs courtesy of Lisa Lipsett. Solstice at Newgrange, design by Eimear O'Neill, photographs Duchas, Ireland. s/Self Transforming: Clearing Circle photographs of Eimear taken by Luciana Ricciutelli.

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This work is dedicated to those who are my home.
To my spritely mother, Maire O'Neill first of all,
To Edmund O'Sullivan, *grá mo bhéatha*,
and partner in life, learning and adventures of the spirit,
To my children Cara and Jeremy Bennison, and Damian Sullivan,
artistic supporters and teachers,
And to the lands of Ireland, West Africa and Eastern Canada
that flow through my bones and being.

Prologue

Two Dreams

I am looking down at the prow of a ship on the sea or large lake, some body of water close to familiar land. The air is fresh with piney breezes and rippling water sounds. At the right side of my vision there are tall cliffs topped by trees and honeycombed with caves. Running frantically around on the deck of the ship below me on the left is a five-year-old white-haired girl whom I recognise with foreboding as myself. There is a large circle with a segment missing cut into the deck and as I watch, this begins to spin. Suddenly the little girl falls or jumps into the dark missing segment and the circle spins even faster. With this spiralling movement, the whole ship begins to sink rapidly under the water until there is no sign of anything on the surface. I continue to watch where it has gone down out of sight with a feeling of watchful expectation. All the same, I am shocked when a figure erupts from the waters into the air, a figure so alive it is flying through the air, full to its skin with energy, not winged but soaring toward the cliffs. As I watch, I see the figure join other somewhat similar figures in one of the caves. I realise there are chattering groups of figures in each of what must be huge caverns because in each there are different communities, some talking around open fires. I can hear the hum of conversation and smell the smoke. The figure I have been focusing on swoops from one cave to another, staying for varying periods of time in each. Suddenly it swoops at full speed directly toward me, landing with breathtaking weight on my chest, and looking right into my face. I cannot avoid looking directly into that face so close to mine and I almost want to, hardly able to bear the intensity and erotic tension of our connecting gaze. There is something elfin, fairy, about the face. I would be hard put to call it female or male, malevolent or kindly. Those words, no words, describe this presence filling my vision and in whose eyes I see my own reflection. There is a sense of greenness. I am awed and terrified as I suddenly awake.

It is 1997 and the night after hearing that all my tapes for doctoral

research on women's process of change in psychotherapy have been destroyed. This dream remains vivid and unfolding in meaning ever since. The second dream arises three years later in early spring 2000 as I decide for one last time to return to doctoral research on what is personally transformative for women in psychotherapy.

I am in my therapy office, the former back porch of a redbrick mansion on St. George Street. There is sunlight pouring into the small warm room. The exposed brick wall opposite the large windows is hung with what appears to be miniature hearths, "home spaces" is my sense of these. I know as I peer with interest into one after another, each very different, that these are the tiny fire places and homeworlds of my clients, friends and colleagues. This multitude of fairy-like realms is some sort of representation of what I had for years called "the group in my head" (i.e., the felt presence of a community of women I work with in varying capacities where what I hear or learn with one woman, informs what I say or do with another). I am open, in beginner's mind, as I take in what is so vividly before me, lighting the therapy space, warming me, as the other walls of the office fade away into open sky.

A week after that dream, in my local supermarket, wooden box lanterns with cut-out images of seasonal renewal, butterflies, flowers, bunnies, frogs and dragonflies, caught my eye. Mass-produced in China for the western market, they were inexpensive. I bought 30 on the tacit recognition that I had found small installation spaces reminiscent of the hundreds of hearth-places in my dream and the fire-filled caves of my earlier vision. I put a few different lanterns on the shelves in my office. When several clients said they might like to "do something" with them, the idea of asking anyone who wished, to use them to hold some sense of their own journeys of self transformation, emerged.

1. Sparks from Embers

Art
Reveals heart
Goes under head
Into what matters

From the dreams and a long discounted yearning to create, emerged my commitment to integrate through artful inquiry, learnings *about* women's journeys of s/Self transformation with what I have learnt in journeying *with* them. Holding Flames is the title of the community art exhibit of women's lanterns that initiated this project and is at the core of this thesis. This manuscript, "illuminated" by women's art, holds the story of that journeying and of women's profound knowledge of the processes of s/Self transformations as demonstrated in their creation of the lanterns.

"s/Self," as written here, refers to the understanding underlying this work that deep change occurs multi-locally in contexts that include and are more inclusive than the personal and the human. By multi-local I mean that transformation occurs not only in the personal meanings and lives of women like myself and the other lantern-makers, but also amongst families and communities, peoples and places. "Holding Flames" was chosen to draw on fire as a metaphor for the process of radical change. Fire carries the complexity of transformational dynamics, being both life-giving and consuming. Flame is the symbol used in many wisdom traditions and in general systems theory to capture "the way open systems like ourselves, consume the matter that passes through it, burning it, so metaphorically does it process information, ever breaking down and building up again renewed" (Macy, 1991, p. 28). "Holding Flames" also describes deep psychotherapeutic processes of staying with disconnected painful experiences long enough to have them reintegrated into the broader contexts of our current lives and understandings. This process is the heart of the personal and communal s/Self transformative journeys shown here.

I had already begun to reconceptualise my research in terms of

transformative learning rather than clinical psychology when the second dream fired my imagination toward artful inquiry and the decision to complete my work at the Transformative Learning Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. At the Transformative Learning Centre, "transformative learning" is defined thus:

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings and actions. It is a shift in consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations, our relationships with human beings and the natural world; our understandings of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, gender; our body awarenesses; our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (O'Sullivan, 2002, p. xvii)

Given the continuing nature of s/Self transformations, I have since refined this definition to replace "permanent" with "irreversible." Artful inquiry within this more transformative and transdisciplinary framework, re-ignited my earlier passions around women's knowledge of their own journeys in psychotherapy. By artful inquiry¹ I mean the use of individuals' and communities' unique creative expressions as epistemology. Involvement in artful inquiry enlarged my field of study beyond psychotherapy and human psychology and became a methodology that was in itself transformative.

Transformative learning is an emergent field within adult education that includes a wide range of scholarship from those descriptively embedded within human cognitive structures (Mezirow & Associates, 2000), to those theorising in more embodied, imaginative, critical and creative ways (Dirxx, 2000; Ettling, 2000; Gozawa, 2000b; Heron & Reason, 1997;

Lipsett, 2002; O'Connor, 2002; O'Neill & O'Sullivan, 2002; O'Sullivan, 1999, 2002; Wane, 2002). At the Transformative Learning Centre, we know our species and our planetary ecologies are disrupted after a century of increasing human violence, environmental degradation and spiritual hunger. We are concerned about our planet's health and place within the universe.

The work echoes that of other activists and learners at the turn into the twenty-first century (Berry, 1988; Bessis, 2001; Goodman, 2002; Tarnas, 1991; O'Sullivan, 1999; Wane, 2000, 2002). From differing perspectives, these scholars writing across philosophies, sciences, and cultural movements, both within and beyond western traditions, agree to three conclusions about human self-transformation. First, human physical, spiritual and emotional well-being is in yet another crisis and this time with devastating planetary-wide effects. Second, human beings' conscious and unconscious processes, including our sciences, values and underlying beliefs, are actively participant in both the crisis and in its potential transformation toward deepening awareness and a more compassionate engagement in the web of life. Third, women's embodied understandings of the transformative cycle of living and their connected ways of knowing, currently marginalized and repressed within mainstream cultures, are central to transforming human consciousness toward more participant living as members of Earth community. There is an urgency around the questions of what is self transformative for humans toward the more life-affirming in this time of accelerating planetary change.

In this thesis I argue that returning to the depths of earlier self-disruptive² experiences, staying with what is under the surface of our conscious life journey, frees our *vis*, or life force, returning us to energetic community living amongst "all our relations,"³ including our Earth. I see this as crucial for s/Self-transformation personally and collectively. Staying with the depths of self-disruptive processes in more embodied, participatory and compassionate ways facilitates that journey toward vibrant

consciousness. Understanding transformative learning and personal change in more deeply relational and embodied ways, makes the creative and imaginative, the artful and symbolic, as central to its process and theory making as the critically reflective generally more familiar in this field (Dirxx, 2000; Ettling & Hayes, 2000; Heron & Reason, 1997; Lipsett, 2002; O'Connor, 2002; O'Sullivan, 1999).

More specifically this project explores *women's* artful embodied understandings of their personal self-transformations, of "a radical change of heart and consciousness that generates a more authentic integrated way of being" (Pritchard, 2000). It is women who express here, through the creation of their artful representations, the disruptive and s/Self healing processes of the human psyche.⁴ The participatory and transformative stance taken here reframes self disruptions as not necessarily pathological and indeed as necessary for radical change. It sees those acknowledging self disruptions and seeking self transformation as "canaries in the mine" rather than "mentally ill." That is, we are evidencing disruptions in larger social and cultural ecologies that threaten more than our/Selves. Consciousness of these disruptions illuminates what is needed for transformation at multiple levels. The nature of art and creative processes sheds light on core aspects of the processes of healing.

Why Transformative Learning Within a Participatory Worldview?

Participatory worldviews, like those of indigenous peoples, recognise all beings, human and non-human, as an interconnected "community of subjects rather than a collection of objects," to use ecologist Thomas Berry's phrase (1989). "A participatory worldview allows us as human persons to know that we are part of a whole rather than separated as a mind over and against matter, or placed here in the relatively separate creation of a transcendent god" (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 275). As such, a participatory

worldview “places us back in relation with a living world and we note that to be in relation means we live with the rest of creation as relatives, with all the rights and obligations that implies” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 276). In a participatory view of knowledge and reality, we are all co-constituting. Together we enact or call forth our world rather than reacting and responding to any given reality “out there” (Capra, 2002). Such a shift from Cartesian dualism radically changes the philosophical underpinnings for any praxis and leads to very different and less anthropocentric understandings of human self, of consciousness and of the processes of change from those articulated in western therapy or education.

There has already been a clear expansion of knowledges toward participatory worldviews, (i.e., within quantum physics, ecology and genetics to name a few examples) (Capra, 2002; Margolis & Sagan, 2001; Maturana & Varela, 1987). However, western theory and praxis around human consciousness and the processes fostering its evolution remain remarkably static. It is true that women’s ways of knowing, along with less androcentric and eurocentric models of self development, have begun to emerge in western theory during the last two decades of the twentieth century (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tartule, 1986; Goldberger, Tartule, Clinchy & Belenky 1996; Jordan 1997; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991). Yet psychotherapy training and practices remain highly individualistic, steeped in unseen cultural values and assumptions and, not surprisingly, generally ineffective in addressing our current crises in human consciousness and ways of living (Greenspan, 2003; O’Neill & O’Sullivan, 2002). I argue that, with a transformative and transdisciplinary perspective, the lanterns exhibit affirms psychotherapy as potentially self transformative.

Personal Roots of the Project and Framework

The roots of my personal passion around transforming the human psyche

were buried for many years and came to the surface in layers.

I knew, for example, that I wanted to be a therapist from age twelve. What I told the Mother Superior at my convent school was that I wanted to be a psychologist or an archaeologist.⁵ I knew I wanted to dig into, to deeply understand *someone’s* history. At that stage, I had no sense that the history I needed to dig into and understand was my own. Fond of mystery stories, I thought of myself as an emotional detective, piecing together evidence that would make clearer to myself and others why human beings treated each other as unfairly as they did, evidence that would identify the wrongdoer and bring about just resolution.

The civil rights movement in Northern Ireland became the focus of my urge for justice, for equity. By the time I began my undergraduate training in psychology, I was already more interested in social rather than “abnormal” psychology, finding the medical framework dominating the discipline unsatisfactory to the emotional detective, too superficial and quickly condemnatory. I ended up doing an undergraduate thesis on the changes in prejudice after Catholic and Protestant children from rioting areas of Belfast spent time playing together in a peace camp.

My first job as a social welfare officer in the working class areas of Belfast as the British Army moved in (1969-70), exposed me directly to armed violence and to the vulnerability of women and children in that situation. I was completely unaware of any personal link to their situation other than my abhorrence of the active involvement of my republican cousins and my pride at my lack of fear, or indeed any intense emotions, in the dangerous settings of my job and community activism. The absence of strong responses of any kind to the mutilation, terror and mayhem around me, did not strike me as odd. Like those around me, I was just managing. The counselling I provided centred on the practical, helping women and children access services including shelter and psychiatric treatment. If a girl was shaved, tarred and feathered by her family and community, I took her away to a border convent. I accompanied depressed

mothers for shock treatments. Even at that early stage in my counselling practice, I was struck by the incongruence of psychological theory and peoples' lived experience. Thus, while the textbooks and diagnosticians told me I was dealing with women and children with depression, I saw people whose lives had been so fundamentally disrupted by violence that they would have been "crazy" *not* to be depressed.

My marriage to a member of an Orange family in armed conflict with my own meant I had to leave Ireland. In retrospect, this was an unconscious attempt to heal deep cultural wounds. Immigration to Canada brought commitment to feminist activism around anti-violence and mental health that I experienced as separate from my work as a counsellor attached to psychiatry and pediatrics in a new general hospital. It *was* very separate. Social context was not taken into account in psychological diagnosis and treatment within the hospital. Not until reading and taking workshops with Jean Baker Miller (1986) in the early 1980s, was I aware that mental health professionals elsewhere were weaving an understanding of the social context of power differences into what was being internalised psychologically as part of human, and particularly, women's personal sense of self. It seemed crucial to know that women and children internalised the perspective of the more powerful as part of ourselves and our perspectives on reality. The effects of violence and violations of the sense of self in shaping and constraining women's development were just beginning to be explored. However, once I began understanding my own role as a psychometrist in local structures of dominance and subordination, my work doing psychological testing and treatment planning in a hospital within a psychiatric model became untenable.⁶

A growing interest in feminist psychoanalysis motivated me to return to graduate school. Relational psychoanalytic study of personal dynamic processes seemed to offer deeper explanation of human responses and of social constructions than those of other psychological theories. At least it considered cultural symbols and the therapist's own history and dynamics

as participant in the therapeutic process, albeit with no sense of the effects of power. Yet I felt that I did not learn enough about therapy and its praxis from the instructors and the various theories they presented. Instead my learning came from the clients I encountered in placements and from on-site therapists. My greatest learning came from my struggles with the gap between what I was being taught in school and what I was hearing from clients and other practitioners. By the time I finished graduate coursework, I had developed my own feminist, relational, and critical perspective on psychotherapy.

As a feminist relational therapist, I recognized mutuality as the *sine qua non* of therapy, within a clear understanding that the therapeutic relationship is always one of power imbalance with the focus necessarily on the client's needs. I began to differentiate the two-way flow of mutuality from equality. The experience of the mutually constitutive dynamics of psychotherapeutic engagement from this perspective was both thrilling and challenging. By the late 1980s, I was paying attention to women's psyches from several other perspectives. By then I was training other therapists, in therapy myself and researching the processes of therapeutic change.

By 1987 I was working as one of the founding psychotherapists in a short-term psychotherapy centre for women, non-medical but attached to a general hospital and free to all clients. The economic accessibility, the fact that the therapy was brief and intensive, and the fact that it was by women and for women, was very exciting. I worked intensely with a wide diversity of women. In the five years I was there, I worked with over two hundred clients. The challenges of meeting, of being fully present with, women whose lives and experiences were very different from my own, expanded my consciousness and my awareness of the artificial boundaries that have been drawn around "knowledge." My clients were the knowledge-makers, the experts who helped develop the relational therapy training that the clinical team provided to other masters' level therapists.

At the same time as I was working at the short-term psychotherapy

centre, I was doing intensive individual work with a woman psychotherapist. I had ventured into therapy several years earlier at the age of 35 when my youngest child was four, and my discontent with my marriage and my work had intensified to unbearable levels. It was not a requirement of my therapist training programme.⁷

As I have occasionally shared with clients, I spent the first eighteen months of therapy with Ruth,⁸ the therapist recommended by a close woman friend, convincing her I did not need her, or indeed, therapy. Feeling my pain and need for connection took time; I was historically more invested in managing without care, in helping others and denying my vulnerability. The care I needed had been available neither in childhood nor in marriage. It was only after marital separation and several years of therapy that the child whose picture graces my own lantern in the Holding Flames exhibit, burst back into vibrant consciousness. With Ruth's empathic attention for that previously disassociated part of me, I recovered memories of childhood sexual abuse. As a weekly client in therapy for five years, I slowly worked through what had happened and how it continued to shape my current responses and relationships.

Actively participating in my personal trauma work was an extraordinary learning around the processes of internalisation and the effects of violation in contexts of power and powerlessness. Apart from bringing greater peace in my daily life, it was invaluable in my work with my clients and trainees. These learnings about the dialectics of personal and social transformation continue to play a significant part in my current writing and therapy process. I was fortunate to have been in therapy with someone who understood trauma in complex and non-conventional ways, particularly the trauma of childhood sexual abuse.

It would have been impossible for me to train and supervise other therapists without having done this intensive work on my own trauma. It deepened my practice and gave me a compassionate language and new ears for what had happened. I did not, for example, hear client stories of

their acts of violence, until I had worked through my own rage and re-enactments. Until I began to work through my own childhood trauma with Ruth, I was not aware of the myriad ways we as therapists subtly support or constrain clients' self transformations. Indeed, sometimes it was my disagreements with her and our ability to work them through together that evoked deep change. I began to see some of the ways we as therapists might unknowingly disrespect our client's capacities for self unfolding, by being too directive or too theory driven. Dealing with trauma in my own life, I have been better able to help others steer their ways through their relationships with an awareness of how and when their own issues muddy or illuminate the process. This applies to those I train and supervise as well as clients. My own now occasional therapy sessions with another therapist, Jean,⁹ continue to reveal much to me about the complex resonant interplay between my own dynamics and those of others, both in and outside of therapy.

I left the short-term psychotherapy centre after five years on the clinical team and several years after an incident where the centre's boundaries were violated.¹⁰ My body eventually insisted I leave, ready or not. I had become increasingly ill, finally bedridden with pneumonia and severe fibromyalgia. At the time, I was a single mother, leaving a salaried, pensioned and benefit-laden job where I had felt contributive. It took nearly three years before I gradually built up a community-based practice.

While at the centre, I had been researching questions about what was self transformative for women within more traditional psychotherapy process research. I had gathered over two hundred hours of taped sessions, complete therapies with ten women. The other two therapists had similar "data," gathered with client permission for research, programme evaluation and therapist training. In 1997, several years after leaving, I requested access to my tapes to encode the movements toward mutuality in sessions. In an abrupt and surreal episode that shook my faith in the feminist underpinnings of the centre's team,¹¹ it was decided that the tapes would

not be used for research purposes. All therapist-client tapes were destroyed before the issue could be brought to an ethics committee or to the clients and therapists involved. For me, this second violation of the centre's privacy and equity boundaries provoked the dream¹² that begins this writing.

My faith in feminism recovered through peer discussions with other relational therapists and the recognition that feminism itself risked institutionalization. Sketches of the team dynamics helped me develop a broader less personalized perspective on the institutional and interpersonal power dynamics in which those betrayals of trust arose. I also was able with Ruth's help to make the connections between my embodied reactions to loss and betrayal of trust as a child and my current health.

Leaving the centre and setting up my practice, I maintained accessibility for a diversity of clients by using a steep sliding fee scale and by enlarging my training in self transformation to include means other than western psychotherapy. I became involved in mindfulness meditation, body work and Aboriginal healing ceremonies. I also increased the amount of community education and consultation offered to other therapists in various community health centres serving large immigrant and refugee populations. I started a peer supervision group with four other therapists from very different settings. The intention was to be connected to many institutions, agencies and communities rather than fully embedded in any one.

Unknotting

By this time I had been a counsellor and psychotherapist, mainly with individual women, for over thirty years. For the last 15 of those years, I had struggled to hold the creative tensions between the understandings from my fairly traditional clinical psychological and psychoanalytic training with those from a host of other ways of knowing, including critical theory, feminist and social justice activism, Celtic¹³ and other indigenous

knowledges, ecology, quantum theory and cosmology, and the wisdom of my own body. The creative tensions from this diversity of knowledges, along with all I have learnt in relationship with the women I have worked with as clients, colleagues and students over the years, required me to question and hold differently much of what I have learnt about therapy and processes of change.

These tensions led to what I see as a Celtic knot of related questions. How, why, and in what ways do I continue to do deep work with particular women when much of what has been disruptive to our personal and collective sense of ourselves happens in social, cultural, familial, and transnational contexts of abuse, violence, neglect and humiliation? And since I acknowledge the role of power not only in the social construction of knowledge but also within the swirling private dynamics of the therapy relationship, how do I ensure that what happens in therapy fosters the emancipation of each woman's spirit rather than the replaying oppressive patterns, especially given my own still internalised oppressions?

The shift from clinical psychology to transformative learning within a participatory worldview provided a framework for this thesis that begins to untangle the knot. It allows some integration of what I know as therapist, learner, educator, researcher and therapy client. Pivotaly, it depathologises self disruption and change, framing such issues within the broader embodied, spiritual, ecological and political contexts implied in the definition of transformative learning as stated above. Transformative learning also provides the more multi-disciplinary, wholistic¹⁴ and critical field of discussion needed to address issues of women's transformation in an integral way. Transformative learning moves beyond the individual and psychological, integrating personal, community and planetary change. In its more expansive forms, transformative learning offers multiple epistemologies, knowledge diversities in dialogue that move beyond human issues, include the Earth as teacher and embrace artful, indigenous, ecological, feminist, anti-racist, post colonial, critical and spiritual ap-

proaches (O'Sullivan, Morell & O'Connor, 2002). Most importantly in terms of participatory worldviews, such expanding of the boundaries of transformative learning generates energy for radical vision, action and new more participatory ways of being and learning in our local communities.

My urges for change were more than academic. After leaving the psychotherapy centre, I had a growing awareness of an outright *need* to be creative, an awareness that grew in inverse proportion to my declining physical health. I knew that if I did not move my own work forward in a creative way, I would be sick. Arthritic processes around the bone-sites of my childhood injuries demanded new movement and self care. I had also developed some sense of sanctuary where self-care and creative work might be possible. My previous rare experiences of sanctuary, of deep safety and mutual participation, were mainly with the natural world, in the wilderness and with animals. With my monkey as a child in Africa, and with my dog as an adult exploring Canada, animals' attunement and presence connected me to my presence in the universe.

The growth of sanctuary is both internal and relational. It is embedded in the natural world as we are embedded in the natural world. And sanctuary, as an interior space, is loving. Loving and knowing are the same word in many languages. Fully understanding another's world fosters love. I do not limit the sense of love to immediate family, and I cannot fail to mention them here. Sanctuary is mutually created, and felt. Both my children are artists. As they developed, so did I. We fostered each others' artistic growth and experimentation, and delighted in what emerged. For me, what was more important than our specific artistic projects, was the creation of homespace that our shared artistic engagement made possible. Here was support for art as knowing.

I had found too, a new partner, one whose experience resonated with and expanded my own. There is a kind of core safety that comes from being not only loved, but encouraged and supported, especially when one is on risky creative ground. That my partner could also challenge me,

push me to explain clearly and lovingly what I wanted to do, why and how, was invaluable. Finally, this period in my life marked a transformation in my relationships with my family of origin, one that more fully honoured my unfolding story of the family's cultural history and my refusal to glorify its associations with violence.

Why Art?

Long before the abstractions of transformative learning, long before language, human knowledge of relationships with themselves, their lands, the Earth and the starry bodies of the cosmos, were flint carved in stone and hand-printed in ochre to share with others.

Making meaning of our lives and place in the humming, rooting, emergent energies of the universe appears to be intrinsic to being human (Berry, 1989). Making meaning of our lives and places in the universe *artfully* and sharing that with others in our communities, is something human beings have been doing long before words. Forty thousand years ago, we were drawing in caves, shaping stone and clay to represent ourselves and our lives in relation to others; all contemporary art is overlay (Lippard, 1983). Yet despite the primary and historic place of artful expression, there has been limited place for art and creative projects as a way of knowing in mainstream academia apart from studies like ethnography where art and artefacts are often interpreted from an expert "other" and coloniser's position. Only in the last decade have a group of scholars established what they term arts-informed or arts-based research as qualitative research that offers expanded possibilities for more participatory understandings, particularly in education (Barone & Eisner 1997; Cole & Knowles, 2001a; Cole, Neilsen, Knowles & Luciani, 2004; Nielsen, Cole & Knowles, 2001).

I use the word art as a synonym for unique creative expression rather than in reference to specific limited forms of creative expression credited

as fine art by the current dominant culture. Art as a way of knowing and expressing what is known has shamanistic roots all around the planet (Roszak & Roszak 2002). In Western cultures, art became more narrowly defined and distinctions made between craft, art, decoration and personal adornment only since the Enlightenment; only since the Enlightenment has there been a colonising dominant elite with power over others and control of communication networks broad and fast enough to define what is meant by art non-locally (McMaster, 1998 ; Shohat, 1998). “Art” as in “art for art’s sake,” is a Euro-western concept from that time. This concept has no word in Aboriginal languages, because the “arts” were woven so integrally into the ceremonial and functional purposes of day-to-day life” (Greer, 2001, p. 56). I am not denying there are distinct differences in skill and perspective between someone with years of formal training and someone self taught, community-mentored or just beginning creative expression in a particular form. I am saying here that artful expression of personal understandings like those found in the Holding Flames Exhibit, is self defining as “artful” in these more inclusive and multi-local ways (see the invitation to participate in the exhibit that begins Appendix A).

Art was not in the theory and training required to become a therapist. Clinical psychology, even more woman-centred relational and feminist psychoanalytic models, have yet to weave the creative into therapy theory. Fortunately for my spirit and for my clients’ well-being, the creative has always been part of my therapy praxis, and increasingly so once I had my own practice. Clients’ art pieces, exploration of cultural representations and imagery, personal creative work processes and awareness of the natural world seep like fresh water into each working day.

The use of art and expressions of imagination as part of others’ research had intrigued me for years, encouraging my sporadic attendance at the informal artful gatherings at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto that were the fore-runner of the Centre for Arts-informed Inquiry and Research. I did not see then how this

might also be part of my own research. Until 2000, I had completed all but my thesis in clinical psychology at another university. Within a week of the dream of the hearth-places, I was committed to artful expression of clients’ personal experiences of self transformation as more respectful, more fitting with mutuality in research and with my long-held sense of the creative, than the interactional coding scales of psychotherapy process research or clinical psychology generally.

Other embers surfaced by fall 2000 once I had changed disciplines and universities to support this radical shift. A visit to the megalithic mounds of the Boyne Valley in Ireland that summer had filled me with reverence for the early peoples of my homeland and their art-held knowing of their relationship with the Earth. Since my childhood in the rain-forests of West Africa,¹⁵ I had sought time in the wilds of various countries. As an adult I had become increasingly sad at the loss of species and habitat. Further ecological consciousness had developed through reading writers like Thomas Berry (1988, 1999), Joanna Macy (1991), Charlene Spretnak (1995). I had a new life partner whose consciousness was both ecological and transformative with whom I could work and write in new ways about the parallels of changing violence against women and violence against the Earth (O’Neill & O’Sullivan, 2002). Like cracking open the crust of a banked fire, these experiences flared together. I felt the sacredness of Earth, the sacredness of the task held by indigenous peoples including my own and some tentative sense of the shamanic roots of art.

While my intellectual understandings and critical thinking had been greatly enlarged by artists and artistic projects like those of Joyce Wieland, Judy Chicago, Frida Kahlo, Jane Ash Poitras, and Carrie Mae Weems, now it was the art of the Irish women of “Unspoken Truths”¹⁶ and the indigenous peoples of “Reservation X”¹⁷ which moved me. While from different cultures and locations, what these women had in common was their use of art as voice and vision for place-rooted perspectives on the daily realities of their lives. These women were honouring their own par-

ticular bodies, local communities and their lands. Their work was accessible, using realistic rather than abstract imagery. It was also full of whimsy and humour, showing rather than telling their tricksterish¹⁸ perspectives. What they seemed to be involved in was “feminist reimagining of community affiliations and cultural practices, articulated not in isolation but rather in relation” (Shohat, 1998, p. 1). I began to see my research more as the second dream had envisioned, as beyond individual change, beyond the confines of psychotherapy or “fine” arts and as necessarily involving women beyond my clients.

Why Women?

Radical human change in consciousness toward the more life-affirming cannot arise without women’s knowledge of what we need to transform from and toward. Women’s knowledge of change is less caught and less invested in modernity’s version of progress and development; much of this version is focussed on rapid technological change, a mechanistic view of the universe, control of nature and of women, and a sense of the divine as “God the Father” (Spretnak, 1995; Jordan et al., 1991).

Modern cultures are sometimes called ‘hypermasculine’ because traits considered masculine, such as the persona of rationalism, are valued more than those considered feminine, such as empathy. Patriarchal socialisation also favours competition and a dominance or submission dichotomy as the structure of relationships, both personal and impersonal. (Spretnak, 1995, p. 221)

I focus on *women* and women’s knowledge to redress epistemological inequities in the literatures and because it is what I know. Women form most of my psychotherapy practice and, as a feminist, are centred in my contexts of understandings around psychotherapy praxis. Furthermore, I

share Caroline Heilbrun’s (1988) view of women as liminal rather than marginal to knowledge-making. That is, they bridge patriarchal *and* women-centered experiences, intergenerational knowledges, embodied *and* socially constructed understandings, in ways that hold necessary tensions in relation. Given also that my areas of community activism and of academic teaching are around anti-violence/anti-oppression and non-medical psychotherapist training and supervision, the fact is that the majority of those who are working and learning with me, are women.

Born female, and active in feminism since my daughter’s first interuterine movements in the mid-seventies, I have a passionate interest in women’s emancipatory struggles and their continually evolving transformations of consciousness within historical contexts. I now tend to identify myself as “womanist” rather than “feminist,” drawing on a more integrated, embodied analysis of oppression that raises issues of feminism’s colonisation by western thought. Still feminism, that is consciousness and action around all forms of women’s oppression, has been one of the most widely transformative of human social movements (Miles, 1996).

The question of what is self-transformative for women is personally relevant at multiple levels. I care deeply about what is self-transformative for women not only because I have been a psychotherapist and social justice activist for so long, but also because I am the four year old girl seen on one of the lanterns in the Holding Flames Exhibit, a life-long learner in the art of transforming from early childhood trauma. While my own traumas and transformations are home-ground to this work, they are but one light on a dark area that needs lighting from many sources. Not only has one woman in three in Canada, like myself, had some form of childhood sexual abuse, but, as the lanterns displayed in the Holding Flames Exhibit make visible, such abuse is but one of many forms of constraint in the ecologies of violence that disrupt women’s sense of self to the point where they seek deep personal and social change (Lynn & O’Neill, 1995; O’Neill & O’Sullivan, 2002).

How to Hold Multiple and Connected Ways of Knowing

Art here provides a holding matrix, a place for the participation of multiple ways of knowing, in what Sue McGregor (2004) calls creative transdisciplinary space. This doctoral project draws on indigenous, heuristic, critical, therapeutic and self-reflective knowledges in addition to those of artful inquiry, psychology and feminism. Using artful inquiry within a transformative and participatory worldview enables these perspectives to converse with each other, like women friends talking deeply around the table after the meal they have prepared together. Not all speak equally. There is space for difference and disagreements. But engagement of each speaking from her own perspective, enlightens all.

Artful inquiry uses creative representations to hold aspects of women's lives in ways that encourage reflection, including self-reflection. "To conceptualise representational possibilities is to be thoroughly alert to the various alternatives that resonate deep within our creative and epistemological make-up. It is to be vigilant and responsive to the metaphorical cues that lives offer. It is to be informed and open to the most 'sensible' and resonant forms (of presumably many) forms for communication" (Neilsen, Cole & Knowles, 2001, p.212). Appealing to the senses and embodying women's experiences and understandings in visual, three dimensional forms, expands the capacity of the project to hold inchoate, paradoxical and dynamic experiences of self transformation at several of ten parallel levels. Artful inquiry informs the lanterns in the Holding Flames Exhibit, my personal art pieces that emerged from involvement in that participatory project and the creative synthesis of women's knowledges in this thesis.

In keeping with that need for personal resonance, the particular art form I have chosen to hold this final synthesis of the Holding Flames project, is inspired by the illuminated manuscripts of my Celtic ancestors. I am Irish born, earth spirited and pre-Christian-identified. While such

manuscripts have a long history as *post*-Christian Irish peoples' way of sharing knowledge, they are also credited with keeping safe earlier knowledges and oral traditions during the upheavals of the Roman Empire, later reseeding the scholastic institutions of medieval Europe (Cahill, 1995). Recently excavated stone-age art from Ireland's Boyne Valley sacred sites, show carvings of human-earth relationships that reveal cosmological perspectives on the island as over five thousand years old (Stout, 2003). Despite the burnings of learning centres and monasteries, some manuscripts from the seventh century onward have been preserved. Because of the status of their embeddedness in European Christian sites, these images and written accounts of oral knowledge were not obliterated like the bark books of Mayan, Pueblo or other peoples. The manuscripts are filled with images of the cosmological interrelationships of human, animal, plant and bird that are clearly pre-Christian. Their illuminations are based on earlier images and are often subversive to the text. They are closer to indigenous beliefs, revealing profound awareness of human kinship with all of the living earth, the cosmos and the unseen worlds of spirit shared with other beings.

Ireland is a tiny spongy island, a mere 100 by 300 miles, surrounded by rough waters. It has been invaded and settled by many waves of peoples with the seventh wave of invasion, the Celts,¹⁹ arriving about 350 BCE and Christian missionaries about 400 AD. It's northern part, my homeland, was the first and still is a British colony.²⁰ The language spoken is English and education is based on British public schools. Remnants of cosmological perspectives are visible in local landscapes but rarely in local academia. The fractured remnants of pre-Celtic culture are held not in written form but in thousands of stone circles, carvings, locally preserved land features like the fairy rings, in folklore and in local language. All these tell of tribal peoples, living in close relationship with the lands, waters and heavens whose movements they knew with lifesaving accuracy. Oral tradition and older manuscript documentation of these stories have

both women and men as druids, poets and warriors as well as holders of land, knowledge and spiritual wisdom. Art was an integral part of daily life and spiritual practice, a way of knowing and of sharing community knowledge. Indigenous cultures like those of pre-Celtic Ireland and of First Nations here in Canada, fostered art and ritual as ways of embodying shared knowledge in community praxis.

With such a planetary history of holding the local and the cosmological, the personal and the collective, artful representations can be self reflective and emancipatory, freeing us from some of the constraints and splits in Cartesian-based academic research. Artful inquiry provides not set answers but rather openings to new ways of thinking and being, including transdisciplinary exploration. Those working in artful inquiry often share the recognition that within a participatory worldview there are no objective truths, that we are part of a Great Mystery and that it is the empathic and respectful inclusion of multiple perspectives that offers some emergent validity.

As a holding matrix, art can be deeply freeing. I agree with bell hooks that aesthetics are a necessary part of a revitalised and revolutionary feminist future and that “Representation is a crucial location of struggle for any exploited and oppressed peoples asserting subjectivity and decolonisation of the mind” (hooks, 1995, p. 3). Art can be emancipatory at deep body-mind-spirit levels. As I will articulate in more detail, in addition to aesthetic form, artful inquiry provides the epistemological equity, mutually empathic resonance and holding of multiply located perspectives in tension that is missing from heuristic research and is essential to a project encouraging decolonisation of body, mind and spirit.

Making Heuristic Research Artful , Embodied and Critical

This work does meet many of the criteria and involves the sorts of processes associated with heuristic research. That is, it explores with others

from multiple perspectives, over a sustained period of time, an experience meaningful to the researcher and to women generally, (i.e. self transformation). It draws on intuitive, reflective and creative expression to do so. However this project is a form of heuristic research whose artful and participatory aspects may free it from Clarke Moustakis’ (1990) positivistic subject-object splits, uncritical assumptions and set stages.

“Heuristic” comes from the Greek word to discover and usually means serving to find out, helping to show the qualities and dynamic relations of research focii. In psychological methodology it means aiding in the discovery of the truth about experiences. Heuristic research refers to the process of internal search through which the researcher discovers the deep and personal meaning of what Moustakis (1990) calls “universally unique experiences”; however, within the participatory co-constituting understanding emergent here, there are no universal experiences, no given truth to be discovered. In participatory understanding, *all* representations of human knowledge are merely heuristic, that is, holding and revealing of some meaningful dynamic patterns of understanding. None hold a full story. Moreover, findings are heuristic, not of some given reality outside of ourselves but rather of the dynamics of our co-creative participation in multiple potential realities.

While deriving from phenomenological approaches that attempt to understand the essence of experience from the perspective of those who have experienced it, heuristic research has its roots also in humanistic psychology, drawing upon Michael Polanyi’s (1983) concept of tacit knowing and Martin Buber’s (1970 [1958]) concept of I-Thou mutuality. To this extent, it is consistent with some honouring of human intuition, conscious and preconscious knowledge as participatory in co-creating events with others. Like phenomenology, heuristic research explicates human experiences from the inside, from the perspective of those experiencing and is thus respectful of subjectivity. However, unlike phenomenology, it emphasises connection and relationship to the experience rather than de-

tachment thus it is also more relational. What it lacks is any critical reflection on the effects of power differences on those relationships, including the relationship between researcher and participants.

Critical perspectives are also missing around what is deemed meaningful knowledge. Given that women's journeys of self-transformation involve transforming from the effects of disruptions, violations and loss in connections with self and others, critical and relational considerations are central to this research. I would argue here that any framework of understanding *not* critical of current relationships of social power in which women are marginalized, exploited, abused and violated, risks supporting and maintaining that status quo. By *not* drawing attention to power dynamics and their effects on whose versions of "reality" get internalised as well as their effects on limiting women's agency and self manifestations, we fail to recognise and increase women's options for creative response. Furthermore, critiques of social power from any and only one dimension of social power, (e.g. on the basis solely of gender, race or class), suffer from the same problem, possibly challenging relationships of dominance in one area but ignoring their significance in others. Hence what is needed here is critical understanding with an integrated analysis of oppressions, one that sees dominance of any kind, whether at personal, relational, institutional, national, cultural, spiritual or species level as limiting full creative participation and mutually enhancing growth. Critical and feminist ways of knowing help us know where we, as women, are participating from in this artful heuristic knowledge-making.

While phenomenology leads to definitive descriptions of structures of experience, heuristic research leads to depictions of meanings and personal significance around experience in ways consistent with transformative learning's exploration and shifting of meaning frameworks. There is some effort to ensure that participants and co-researchers remain visible as whole persons. To paraphrase Moustakis (1990), while phenomenology seeks to discover the essence of an experience, heuristic research seeks to discover

the essence of the person in the experience. Weaving artful inquiry into the heuristic research process enabled each woman who created a lantern to present her own perspective on change in her own way and from her own place. The lanterns in the Holding Flames Exhibit are thus the expressions of a community of knowledge makers rather than "data" with each lantern being interpreted for meaning by the researcher. Thus the artful limits researcher interpretation, increases epistemological equity beyond the constraints of dominant languages and enables representation of meanings around processes of self transformation that are particular as well as communal. Hence its suitability for a project on women's ways of knowing and learning to transform their consciousness.

Involvement of artful representation *embodies* heuristic understandings, moving them beyond abstraction. What George Lakeoff points out in "Philosophy of the Flesh" is that our physical embodied experiences both shape and limit our meaning-making (Lakeoff & Johnson, 1999). It is from embodied actions and relational experiences²¹ that we communally form and pass on our heuristics or stories of how the world may be seen. ("Heuristics" is used here as a noun as well as in the more familiar adjective form to convey the idea of models or representations holding some sense of the relational dynamics involved.) Denying or ignoring our embodied realities gives us a distorted knowledge perspective. Denial of our profound embodied interconnectedness and co-constituting relationships with each other and with what David Abram (1996) calls "the more-than-human world," has led to our current levels of economic, military, environmental and epistemological violence. Human power to impact life systems without sufficient consciousness to make choices toward more mutually enhancing living over the long term is clearly self-destructive. The need for more participatory, less fragmenting, and more ecological embodied consciousness is urgent. The issue is whether the heuristics or dynamic models we have of human consciousness and of processes of transformation, are free of assumptions that "other" our fel-

low participants in earth community. The issue is not whether heuristic research is “true” but whether it holds what Vine Deloria (1996) calls “responsible truths.” Effective heuristics embodying responsible truths, broaden our options to respond in more mutually enhancing and meaningful ways with others and with our earth. A better question is: “Are such heuristics generative, firing us to seek deeper and more creative understanding rather than providing set answers?”

The lanterns in the Holding Flames Exhibit are the illuminative phase of this artful heuristic research just as the community installation is the explicative phase. The exhibit in public display over the last three years, has supported my fuller explication of that communal understanding and its application to therapy and community education. The participatory perspective emergent in this thesis suggests that Moustakis’ (1990) stages²² are but moments in a continuing spiral flow. That is, the lanterns in the Holding Flames Exhibit and personal art pieces foster new engagement with women’s processes of s/Self transformation, including my own and lead to different immersions and hence to further illuminations. A participatory perspective suggests “enactment” might be a further heuristic stage as new dynamic understandings are tried out in practices.

One other feature of heuristic research is relevant here. Such research risks reopening old wounds in the researcher. Given that the question explored is personally relevant, given there is a returning again and again to the artful “data” with its capacity to elicit emotion, this is hardly surprising. What was surprising for me was that the wounds opened were not only those from my childhood sexual abuse but those from my British education. Writing formally²³ was and remains, torturous. I could write strong academic papers on others’ ideas but putting forward my own, raised enormous conflict. I tried to put too much into every sentence, over referenced and became lost in tracking what I had said or not said. Memories of crying over my homework in boarding school, of striving for high marks and never being satisfied with what I got, of dreading report

cards and feeling guilty that I had let my parents and my school down, flooded in. As I delved deeper into the experiences held in the lanterns and personal art pieces, my writing became more and more complex and more fragmented. I was driven to write and avoidant at the same time. Only with the emergence of the holding heuristic below more than two years into the process, did the tension ease.

Those involved in the “Women’s Ways of Knowing”²⁴ project over the years have pointed out the multiple ways of knowing women draw on and the disruptive effects of violence and loss in relational contexts on women’s learning and knowledge production (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tartule, 1986; Goldberger, Tartule, Clinchy & Belenky, 1996). They have also emphasised the importance of connected knowing in enabling more integral development. In contrast to separate knowing characterised by distance, assumed impartiality and scepticism, connected knowing is a stance of belief and an entering into the place of the other person, a compassionate and curious staying with one’s own and the other’s experiences that transforms the meaning frameworks of all involved. It involves too “the paradox of separateness in connection” to quote Judith Jordan (1991, p. 72). That is, self knowledge is central to knowing who the other is in a fuller way. “Connected knowing with the other and connected knowing with the self are reciprocal rather than oppositional processes” (Clinchy, 1996, p. 232).

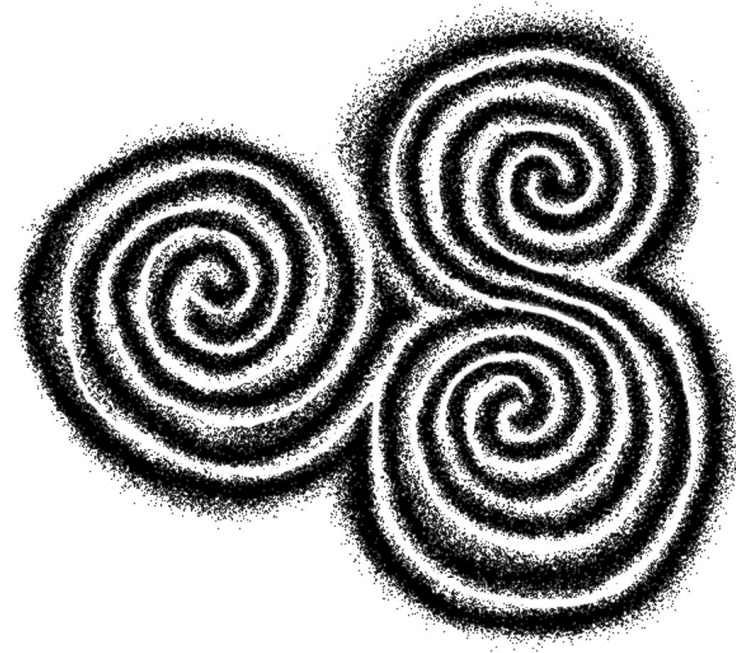
The Holding Flames Exhibit is an example of connected knowing, where as researcher I am tracking the empathic resonances and differentiations between my own experiences and those of the other lantern-makers. In the personal art pieces, it is intellectual and connected knowing with often disavowed aspects of my self that is involved. Blythe McVicar Clinchy (1996) remarks on the epistemological power when both separate and connected knowing are practised in partnership with other knowers, when a community of knowers from differing experiences collaborates to explore wholistically a meaningful topic.

Feminist knowledge relies on collective consciousness²⁵ rather than individual gurus, on what becomes known and shared with other women through speak-outs, consciousness raising groups, feminist friendships and activism, and women's studies. "We hear each other into being" is Carolyn Heilbrun's (1988) expression for that participatory reality.

The Holding Flames Exhibit opened up a space for a community of women knowledge-makers to put forward and share artful representations of their own journeys of self transformation. Together these give some sense of the embodied presence, creative diversity and many places from which each and all of us who participated, understand our heartfelt experiences of deep personal and radical change in being. Together they are heuristic of the participatory nature of that transformation. The exhibit is public witnessing of the energy, joy, suffering and creative responsiveness of a diverse group of self-reflective women sharing their knowledge of that transformative journey within a safe enough place and process. In spiraling fashion it in turn provided a community of support for my own knowledge making.

The Holding Heuristic

This triple spiral may be familiar since it has been assimilated into Celtic and monastic Christian art. More recently, it has become a trademark for Irish antiquities. The original carving was found in Newgrange,²⁶ the largest of the Boyne Valley's megalithic mounds, built with a womb-shaped interior into which the winter solstice sun penetrates. It is carved on the interior passage that leads like a birth canal between the outer world and the three chambered area where ceremonies of birth, death and renewal were held. Spirals of this type have been found mainly in Ireland (Stout, 2003). It has multiple meanings. *In situ*, it indicates knowledge of the cycles of solar, lunar and planetary bodies and the centrality of these to community living, at least as early as 5000 BCE (Stout, 2003). To a con-



Megalithis Triple Spiral; carved with flint into stone, artist or artists no longer known, Valley of the Boyne River, Ireland, circa 6000 BCE

temporary scientific eye, it echoes the spiral shape of our galaxy and gives some sense of the interconnected flowing universe with its shared dynamics (Berry, 1989; Sagan, 1980). In indigenous knowledges like those of the Celts who adopted this symbol into their knots, it indicates the interconnectedness of earth life, of all life cycles and of the continuous journey of the spirit or soul through the various transformative cycles of living (Mathews, 2000.). In deep ecological and artful terms, it is a deep form. Deep forms are repetitive patterns of energy or dynamics underlying complex biological and symbolic structures (Roszak & Roszak, 2002). These forms of certain proportions and patterns, appear over and over again in nature. They are also repeated in how things grow, the specific

spiralling dynamics here echoing the growth movement of plants, of galaxies and of human DNA (Doczi, 1991).

The spiral is used in this thesis in multiple ways. In its integral tensions, it represents what Berry (1989) refers to as the universal dynamics of subjectivity, differentiation and communion and emergence, which underlie the cosmological and participatory worldview.²⁷ In its interconnectedness and nested layers of context, it provides a meaningful image for an emerging multilocal, multicentric and dynamic notion of self and of s/Self transformation that challenges western static individualised and decontextualised understandings. In its movements and connections, seen and unseen, it maps journeys of personal self-transformation from the inside out and the outside in. The process of this manuscript is also based on this form, with three interconnected encirclings of the “data,” in terms of illuminations from the Holding Flames Exhibit, in making visible the shadows of trauma, oppression and colonisation in the lanterns and personal pieces, and in exploring the spiralling journey toward s/Self transformation. Finally, the triple spirals underlie and inspire the interconnected “Circles of Transformation,” the multi-level projects and new beginnings described in the last section of this manuscript.

In this thesis, this ancient Irish symbol, helps hold the multiple ways of knowing that inform artful inquiry in addressing the question of what is s/Self transformative for women. It suggests that our journeys of s/Self transformation from constrained contexts toward freer more interconnected and integral development, are non-linear and multi-local. It provides an ongoing reminder of the loose weaving together of multiple ways of knowing toward an integral and emergent form.

Mapping the Text

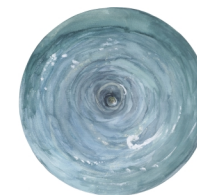
The text of this thesis is in three parts, or encirclings of the “data.” This doctoral project began with two personal dreams. The visionary and the

creative are central to this research, given the recognition that personal vision taps into more collective or archetypal understandings, held in our bodies and the body of our earth (Jung, 1961 [1911-12]; Perera, 2002). Honouring the spiralling process of this work, small images from the final “s/Self Transforming” installation here introduce each section.



First Circle: Holding Flames Illuminations from Community Art

In the next section, the lanterns individually and in community are introduced. The relationship between artful inquiry and women’s expression of their journeys is explored here. Viewing the lanterns in multiple ways and settings, seeing the underlying patterns and relationships within the project’s frameworks, leads to three main illuminations. Journeys of s/Self transformation are multi-local, participatory and indigenous. Exploration of my lantern forms the connection into the next encircling



Second Circle: Making Shadows Visible Trauma, Oppression and Colonisation

The second encircling begins with the development of the triple spiral

heuristic. I then use my lantern to show the ways artful inquiry reveals and holds in compassionate relationship aspects of self, even those parts earlier disassociated. It draws on the processes initiated by the creation of this lantern for the Holding Flames Exhibit to begin exploring what women are transforming from in terms of oppression, trauma and colonisation of body, mind, spirit, peoples, and place. This exploration examines current literatures in light of the exhibit's illuminations. Reviewing the lanterns in the Holding Flames Exhibit, along with closer examination of my own lantern and of a new personal piece of artful inquiry, the Shadow Box, enable us to spiral down and up through both the wounding and the healing. The process of "Sitting in the Fire" and "Eating the Shadow," of staying with those painful experiences compassionately, deeply and long enough to surface toward integral development personally and collectively, lead us into the final encircling.



Third Circle: s/Self Transforming

The third circle is reconnected with the first. Patterns underlying journeys of s/Self transformation emerge from the lanterns in the Holding Flames Exhibit, my own lantern, the Shadow Box, and a final installation. "s/Self Transforming" is a three-piece installation in collaboration with the natural world. Completing this and attempting to write from this more indigenous and participatory place, brought me up against a deeply and protectively encapsulated part of self. Writing stopped. I began instead to actively work with others around becoming more indigenous to body, peoples and places in intertwining circles of transformation.

The project concludes with glimpses of the interconnected transformative projects that emerged from this active period to illustrate the conclusions of the Holding Flames project in action. Like the spirals, the projects are ongoing and the manuscript ends with these new beginnings networking with others envisioning participatory human-earth connections in therapist education, in making art for Earth's sake, and in developing and providing places for an international indigenous education network.

¹I have chosen "artful inquiry" as a broad, more inclusive and less cognitive or fine arts focussed term than "arts-based" or "arts-informed" inquiry. Artful inquiry sees creative representations as both a manifestation and a source of knowledge in illuminating issues such as the nature and processes of personal and collective self transformations.

²By "self-disruptive" I mean those experiences which disrupt self structures in ways that *do not* lead to more integrated and life-affirming living, (e.g. traumatic experiences).

³"All our relations" is the term First Nations peoples use for human connections to all other humans, animals, stones, rivers, stars and all the web of life. I use this term several times in this thesis to emphasize my belief that as "relatives" we have reciprocal responsibilities for care. Approaching any form of life with this ethos, encourages their self disclosure.

⁴The word "psyche" means spirit, breath, and wind, "the permeable power of life" (Keller 1995, p. 279). "Psychotherapist," from the same Greek roots, means one who pays attention to the psyche.

⁵She laughed and said disdainfully that I could hardly spell that and would be "a teacher or a nurse like the rest of us."

⁶One example; our Polish chief of psychiatry had just committed an Irish woman, a recent immigrant, who was talking of pilgrimages to the stoney island of Lough Derg, as delusional and schizophrenic.

⁷It is not a requirement of many therapist training programmes. Psychoanalysis is one of the few trainings that requires that those in practice get to know their own dynamic issues before attending to others’.

⁸This is a pseudonym

⁹I have her permission for this usage; the work Jean and I are doing together is addressed in the section on “Making Shadows Visible.”

¹⁰A team member handed over a client file to the hospital without telling client, therapist or other team members. Despite outside facilitation, trust was never fully re-established amongst team members.

¹¹The hospital, with the collusion of a team member, decided destruction was legal because the signed consents for research had just elapsed. On a three to two vote, the team agreed.

¹²Jung refers to such dreams as “compensatory,” revealing of the strengths of non-dominant functions, in my case the intuitive and imaginative rather than the rational and feeling functions.

¹³By “Celtic,” I mean pertaining to those indigenous peoples with distinctive art, spirituality, consciousness, social forms and earth relationships, emerging as a group in Northern Europe by 1,000 BCE, the remnants of whom, like myself, speak Gaelic (Beresford Ellis, 1990).

¹⁴Throughout this thesis I will use the meaningful spelling of “wholistic” familiar to First Nations scholars.

¹⁵Born in Northern Ireland, I spent the years from 2 to 12 mainly in Ghana. I was sent back to Northern Ireland alone at 8 to boarding school.

¹⁶“Unspoken Truths,” is an exhibit through the Irish Museum of Modern Art, of many women’s personal art pieces from working-class areas of Dublin (see also “Woman of Ireland,” *Canadian Woman Studie/les cahiers de la femme*, 17, (3) 1997).

¹⁷*Reservation X: The Power of Place in Aboriginal Contemporary Art* is a multi-artist exhibit at Canada’s Museum of Civilisation and a publication edited by Gerald McMaster (1998).

¹⁸The trickster is comical, often bawdy, and a shape-shifting and teaching

figure in many indigenous stories.

¹⁹The peoples the Celts displaced did not disappear. They became through oral tradition the little people, or fairy whose spirits continue to live in active relationship with the current peoples of the land. Farmers still plough round such mounds or fairy forts which are considered openings to the Otherworld.

²⁰In 1157, the Pope gave Ireland to Henry II of England. The current “Troubles” in Northern Ireland since the 1960s are but the latest response to this last and longest invasion.

²¹Such embodied relational practices would include art making and display, community rituals and care.

²²These stages begin with engagement, immersion and incubation, lead to illumination and explication, then culminate in creative synthesis and presentation of research findings.

²³Writing in school or institutions was torturous, letters to intimates, poetry and journaling were markedly less fraught.

²⁴“Women’s Ways of Knowing” is an extensive study of women’s learning patterns from their own perspectives rather than fitting that learning into theories developed from men’s experience.

²⁵Conscious comes from Latin, “con” or “with” and “sciere” the verb “to know,” to know with.

²⁶Newgrange, like the Sun Dagger in New Mexico, is an ancient and still used site of astronomical knowledge and community rituals of renewal. Moonlight and sunlight illuminate different carved symbols at different times revealing a narrative of death, birth and rebirth co-created with the natural world (Moane, 1997).

²⁷Subjectivity is the self-unfolding interiority or depth experience of any form, differentiation its particularity and communion its necessary interconnection with others. Emergence is the quality of continual transformation from all three together.

2. Holding Flames Exhibit



Solstice display at Wonderworks, Toronto, 2001

The Exhibit

Women self-defining as having undertaken personal transformation were invited to take one of the mass-produced wooden lantern boxes available to capture some immediate sense of their own journeys of profound change. Boxes could be used in any way that helped hold some sense of their own journey. Artistry was less the issue than the creation of something truly reflective of experience, momentary or lasting. The only limitations were that the finished piece be less than three cubic feet and still safely useable as a lantern in community display with others. The screen, supports, plants, digital photo record, guest book and desk were provided by the current curator.

Lanterns were gathered as the illuminative component of doctoral research on what fostered personal women's self transformations. The women responding included colleagues, fellow students, therapy clients and the researcher. All of us had undertaken some chosen process of change, whether psychotherapy or some less eurocentric approach such as work with native elders. A brief artist's statement accompanies some pieces and some pieces speak for themselves. Confidentiality is maintained, i.e. no names or directly identifying information are on the pieces. Some have signed their artist statements and all chose to reveal themselves to the researcher over the course of the exhibits.

The first installation was in a community accessible gallery on spring solstice, April 2001. It opened with a celebration to which all participants and their guests were invited. The second installation, at the Fourth International Transformative Learning Conference in the University of Toronto, was attended by many including participants, the third returned to the community gallery. Announcement at showings that long term public exhibit might be an option to dispersal led to many participants wanting the lanterns to stay together and in public view. The fourth exhibit is currently housed in the community lounge of the Adult Education and

Counselling Psychology Department at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education where it shares space with many gatherings, including those of the Transformative Learning Circles, the Indigenous Education Network and the Centre for Arts-based Inquiry and Research.

The installation holds the embodied and participatory nature of human consciousness, the deep differentiation, subjectivity, community and emergence of each woman's home-placed experience of change. Currently, there are thirty-six lanterns, including the researcher's. Together, they give some sense of the embodied presence, creative diversity and many places from which each and all of us, as a community of knowledge-makers, understand the transformations needed for human change. By sensing, responding and filling in their comments in the guest book, by imagining what their own lantern might look, viewers and readers too become participant researchers in self transformation.

It is through the embodied presence of the lanterns, seeing, touching, smelling, hearing and feeling them, that their full power is experienced. Readers of this text are here invited to see the Holding Flames Exhibit in digital video below and by reviewing images in close-up with their corresponding artist statements in Appendix A, the exhibit record.



Long-term display at the University of Toronto

PLACE DVD AND POCKET HERE



Ember



Puzzle Wizard



Rainbow



Cactus



Boat



Child



Brook



Seed



Sanctuary



Jar



Red Ribbon



Doors and Windows



Frog Climb



Angel



Goddess



Luce



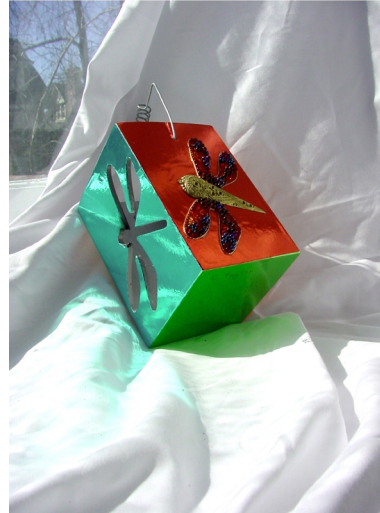
Frog Up Rabbit Down



Nest



Tadpole



Dragonfly



Tree



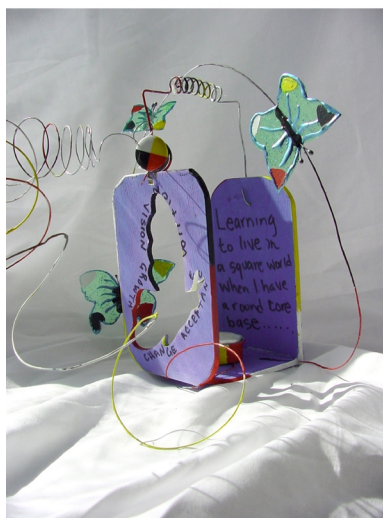
Mummy



Woman in Time



Invisible



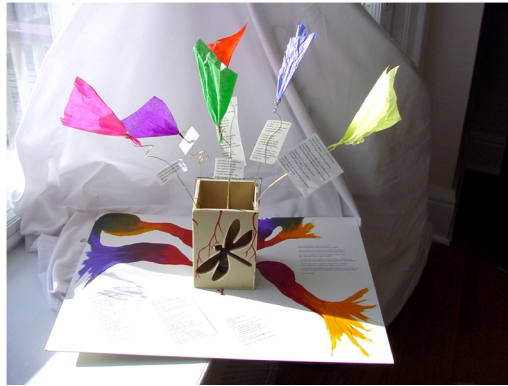
Four Directions



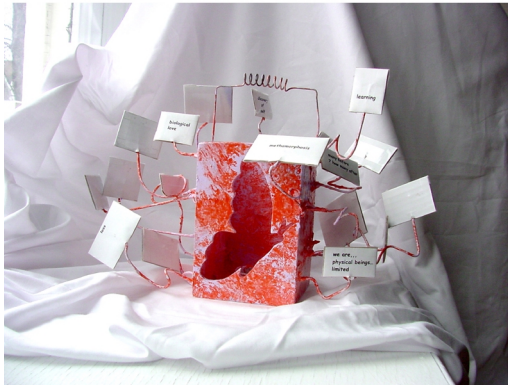
Jaw



Feather



Flags



Sprung



Less is More



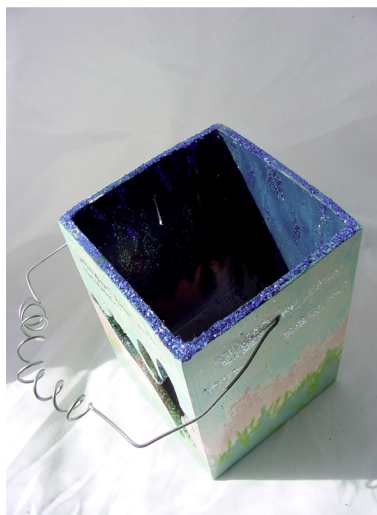
Handle



Math



Wave



Council of Rabbits



Moon



Guts

The Gathering of Lanterns

From its dream conception, I was clear that the Holding Flames Exhibit would include the representations of women who experienced self transformation and that these would not be restricted to my psychotherapy clients or those of colleagues. “The group in my head” of women actively involved in self transformation whose hearths I envisioned on my office wall, included friends and colleagues as well as clients. A qualitative research course with a feminist radical therapist with expertise in trauma as faculty (Burstow, 1999, 2003) and mainly female class participants, provided supportive community and a critical heuristic framework for the research. I made my own lantern and the display structures during that time. A course in artful inquiry, led by faculty in a couple’s relationship (Cole & Knowles, 2001a; Knowles & Cole, 2002), introduced me for the first time to the marrying of art and academic methods. Both these communities provided suggestions and critiques that were invaluable. Exploring artful inquiry in a class that began the day after September 11th, 2001’s terrorist attacks in New York was particularly intense and deepening to the project. There was great support in being with a diversity of others forging new areas of creative scholarship within academic constraints (browne, 1999; Cole & Knowles, 2001a; Davis-Halifax, 2002).

The issues to be resolved in the research course were how to ensure that my clients were free to participate with the same confidentiality accorded to others while recognizing and addressing the power dynamics and possible vulnerabilities of the therapeutic relationship. Clients of psychotherapy, my own and others, clearly had crucial knowledge to contribute about processes of self transformation. In traditional research, the treatment of therapy clients solely as vulnerable, tends to exclude their experiences of therapy from their own perspective. Academic research processes can sometimes end up excluding the input of communities such as therapy clients and psychiatric survivors that are both vulnerable *and* expert. In

this particular instance,¹ creative interpretation of the ethical review guidelines enabled the exhibit to be classified as “public archival materials” and the women’s knowledge held there to be included in academic research. An artful² project seemed to offer the opportunity to share information through more self directed modes of expression with fuller confidentiality. Even as the qualitative research course began, five clients had already given in lanterns under the simple criteria that remained throughout the project (Appendix A, p. 1). Once I had formalized the lantern gathering process with an information sheet and written consent forms satisfactory to fellow research course participants and the university ethics committee, these lanterns were returned with a letter explaining that they could be resubmitted with sealed consents returned to the supervising faculty member or they could be kept. All five chose to keep their lanterns participant in the exhibit. This illustrates some of the sensitive issues in the process and the outcome tended to support the research process as being respectful and trustworthy.

The call to participate in the project (see Appendix A) was posted in places where women self-defined as undergoing or having undergone personal transformation might frequent. It was placed in three women’s bookstores, the Transformative Learning Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the University of Toronto’s Counselling Centre and the waiting room of the St. George Counselling Centre that I share with six colleagues. No mention of the project was raised by me in therapy sessions, though I did answer questions, underlining the point made on the invite that there would be no interpretation by me of individual pieces. Emphasis was also made on the invitation that the pieces were not so much about making art as about making something truly reflective of women’s own transformative journeys.

The only limitations put on what participants might do with the original wooden box lantern supplied, was that the finished pieces be less than three cubic feet in area and still safely usable as lanterns. Both these

stipulations were related to the stated intention to display the gathered pieces in a community accessible space. Group display was the only way, given individual confidentiality, that lanterns could be shared with each other and the community at large rather than remaining somehow the “property” of the researcher. Participants were encouraged not to include obviously identifying information on their lanterns. Lantern boxes were supplied. They could be picked up and dropped off anonymously in the waiting room of the St. George Counselling Centre or at the Transformative Learning office at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Signed consents attached to each lantern were forwarded unopened to director of the qualitative research course.³ Every lantern handed in was displayed. Artist statements were optional. I did not provide an artist’s statement nor was my lantern privileged in placement within the display.

In the end, all participants made themselves known to me over the course of the three initial displays. I was in turn forthright with known participants about which lantern was mine, without comment on its significance.

The Boxes

The base lantern boxes were wood, with an attached curled wire hanger. There was a small tea light holder in the middle. One face of each box was cut out in various spring symbols, butterflies, frogs, flowers, rabbits and dragonflies, so the tea light within could be seen. The boxes were brightly stained, blue, green, yellow, pink, white or beige. The small size, inexpensive materials and symbols of renewal seemed to make them accessible. Participants, who chose from all the available shapes, made comments such as; “Glad it was small”; “It won’t matter too much if I mess it up”; “Appeals to the kid in me” and “Love frogs!” As becomes clearer when we see the altered lanterns, the original cut-outs were taken for or changed to become images of renewal or transformation.

The Lantern Makers

Because they chose to reveal themselves and their lanterns to me, it was possible to get some sense of the diversity of the women involved. The women participating range in age from their early 20s to their late 60s. They are mainly white women, though not all North American; some are European. There is racial and ethnic diversity echoing that of Toronto’s population, that is, at least 30 percent were women outside of the dominant culture. Indigenous women, women from Africa, the Caribbean and South America participated. Most of the women were educated (post-secondary school), which I think has mostly to do with where the invitations were posted. Educated and clearly reflective, the participants are widely varied in terms of class and privilege. Some are reliant on student loans, mothers’ allowance and welfare, others on earned and even on inherited wealth. They are from a wide variety of spiritual traditions, Native, Buddhist, Jewish, Eck, Muslim and Pagan, to mention a few other than Christian. Several of the women had disabilities, mostly invisible, for example, arthritis, heart conditions, cancer and fibromyalgia. Although a few participants are professional artists, the majority range from previous inactivity to lively arts engagement. Almost all had participated in some form of therapy. Others had participated in spiritual retreats or less Eurocentric forms of transformation like work with native elders or mindfulness training. All had sought some process of personal transformation in relationship with another.

Making the Lanterns

Each lantern was taken home and worked on by women in their own space for varying lengths of time according to artists’ statements and verbal report. Some were worked on for many hours, some finished at one sitting, others developed over time. Artists statements (Appendix A) pro-

vide stories of the lantern-making process.

The process of making the lanterns and putting what they knew forward in public display, was a form of transformative learning for many participants. To quote from artist statements; “Transforming the lantern had many parallels to my own personal experience of transformation,” “I had never done anything like this before but could hardly wait to get to the basement each evening,” “For the lantern, formerly an incubator, has now become a box, which we must leave if the change is to be complete and the transformation to be manifested in the world,” “It felt like a relief after the wall of the box snapped. Already this was reflecting my transformational process—the walls were coming down⁴ and I was the one going to re-arrange them” (Appendix A, “Puzzle Wizard” artist statement).

The process of making the lanterns and being involved in their public display was not only transformative for some participants, it was also revealing of the transformative journey. Thus the woman who made the “Puzzle Wizard” describes stamping on the box with her hiking boots, “I felt a very strong desire to break the confines of the box”; another speaks of layers of chaotic and often angry responses emerging under the smooth plastered exterior (Mummy artist statement, Appendix A).

My own lantern was started about one month after the initial invitation was posted and took about twelve hours of work spread out over the next two months. I knew from that second dream that I would be a participant and that the rounded terracotta pot from that same office wall featured in the dream, would be the base for some sort of open garden-like structure. I had not expected the wood to be so dense and difficult to cut, requiring tedious work with a small handsaw. My other problems in beginning the process were more internal and ego driven. I feared that it would not turn out as I wished; it had to be beautiful. I wanted to and yet feared, putting out vulnerable parts of myself in public. I feared making what my family of origin used to call “a holy show” of myself. The idea of using a favourite childhood photograph, taken when I was four and a half,

came intuitively and very early in attempting the piece. It is an image that, to me, holds the openness, joy and spirited engagement with living that I have sought in self-transformation. Choosing it spurred me to start and to work out how to frame the photo so that it was secure and integral to the structure. Stone has always been a fascination. I collect small pieces wherever I travel. Hence I had a selection on hand. Planting thyme round the structure appealed to my love of puns and to my senses. I did not supply an artist’s statement nor was my lantern privileged in placement within the final display. The final stages of the construction process were, like any process of transformation, both disruptive and illuminating.

My struggle to slowly and carefully carve out the garden-like formation was followed by an attempt to sink the tea-light into the earth of the terracotta pot through a hole drilled out of the bottom of the lantern. The box form flew apart. When painstakingly re-glued, there was still a place high at the front of the structure which would not hold together. It was here that I ended up putting the bone “shiela-na-gig,”⁵ marking boundaries torn and repaired. At the time of the first exhibit, this moment enabled me to learn to be content with what unfolded rather than upset with not getting it “right.”

Form

Artful inquiry is a form of qualitative research that uses various types of creative expression in both method and explication of findings. A central part of artful research is the choice of forms capable of paralleling the processes or dynamics being explored. The diversity of lanterns and the extraordinary richness of detail, use, artist interpretation and transformative effect, support the lantern box as a fitting form for artful inquiry. It is fitting also because it does *not* fit and can be transformed. The box form and context of the current research do limit what is represented. And yet, as the lanterns make evident, this limitation also encourages transgression



Bare screen.



Viewing the exhibit.

of boundaries and challenges to previous form and context. Boxes are broken open, built upon, planted and even burnt, to capture different women's journeys.

Installation is another art form in the Holding Flames Exhibit. It is pertinent here because it has both scene and place setting capacities. The screen on its own marks out a holding place. It is from the combination of the folding screen environment and the participation of each of the 36 lanterns that a particular kind of space and place is formed. Then as an accessible public community installation, the exhibit not only makes a place and takes up a space, it evokes comment and provides backdrop and support for all sorts of conversations about the content. Viewers find it engaging in an embodied way. It is the participation of all these elements along with the lights, smells, sounds and images that evokes guest book comments of the exhibit as a sacred site.

Displaying the Lanterns

As soon as the lanterns began to come in January 2001, it was evident that each was distinctive and required its own space, that is not all could be hung, some needed careful balancing or a large base area. The idea of making a double-hinged, flexible wooden screen to hold them all in community and give each its own pedestal or hanger, emerged intuitively just prior to the first spring Solstice showing. A long established store devoted to women's well-being, spirituality and healing, close to the university, offered its workshop space. It was easily reached by public transport, wheelchair accessible and open beyond regular work hours. The timing of this first exhibit was deliberate, echoing our earth connection in cycles of transformation. Spring solstice is a time of renewal and illumination in many wisdom traditions. I drew a flames template for the top of the screen to have it "hold flames" in real and symbolic ways. Sanded and shaped coat-

hangers in unique forms hold lanterns in tension away from the flammable screen.

Lanterns ended up being displayed in roughly the same “order” in relation to the screen each time. That “order” came about through a complex interplay of lanterns’ particular shapes, dimensions and colouration, their specific needs for support and visibility, and curator intuition. For example, a delicately balanced “flaming box” was placed out of easy reach; the tiny words on top of one lantern wall, “I have nothing to be ashamed of”, were placed to be readable. Lanterns’ resonance with each other sometimes determined where they found a place. Thus, a circle of rabbits under the night sky seemed at home on the ground near a log and a goddess-like dragonfly better hung higher.

Additional supports were ready-made post toppers and variable sized logs from a local garden centre. I had digitally photographed⁶ each of the lanterns and these images were displayed alongside relevant artist statements. The portfolio containing these was placed on the desk at the end of the display, alongside a guest book for viewers’ comments. The decision to place the statements separate from the lanterns themselves and after they were viewed was made for several reasons. As infants and as a species we see before language or text. It did simplify display logistics. It also seemed to somewhat subvert the cultural tendency to seek meaning first from text rather than artful representations. Some of the more than a hundred participants, colleagues, family and friends who came to the opening ceremony tucked spring flowers around the base. When it was complete, there was a sense of community, of each distinctive and together, a sense of the particular linked by unseen connections, that comes through even in the photographs.

Documenting the Exhibit

Documenting the pieces was also a form of artful inquiry and mindful

reflection. Each time I photographed, filmed or wrote journal entries about the lanterns, new details, understandings and relationships were revealed. Hence the initial digital photographing of each lantern, small versions of which appear through the text, fostered deep appreciation for the particular moments and contexts held in each piece. Videotaping the full exhibit for the DVD brought awareness of how the lanterns resonated with each other or “spoke” as a community. For example, the way one lantern stretched upwards enabled me to see that movement repeated in many. At the end of the filming I realized the numbers of lanterns that held spiritual significance. Presenting lantern images as a group and individually in various formats [miniature cards, large slides, tiny illustrations], furthered appreciation of their diversity, numinosity and the taming power of the small.

The Opening

Holding an opening ceremony to honour the lanterns was also transformative to the project. Suddenly the significance of taking up and claiming space for what is known in this deeply embodied way, was palpable. There were 85 women, possibly sixteen children and adolescents, and more than ten men present. The invitation had spread through word of mouth about the presence of the installation in the heart of the Annex, a neighbourhood of students, artists, academics and feminist services. A native woman elder, the mother of a friend and colleague, began with a graceful inclusive blessing of the Earth and all here present involved in creation.⁷ She did a smudge cleansing with sweetgrass of each in the circle who wished. Marking with respect all who chose to put themselves out creatively, acknowledging our deep interconnectedness, on this one occasion when the community represented in the installation might be in the same room together, was fitting. The music, singing, and poetry, much of it spontaneous, that followed, was celebratory. Guest-book comments give

some sense of the atmosphere. “An illuminating and poetic experience”; “A humbling, moving experience, beautifully done. I am very happy to share this”; “Women’s wisdom, women’s wonder, the passion of passion, from grief and vulnerability to ecstasy, within the grief and within the joy. What inspiration and what a wondrous sacred space!” “An amazing and beautiful experience to participate in.”

More Community Displays

The second public display of the lanterns was in a very different context, in the Adult Education and Counselling Psychology Department of the university as part of the Fourth International Transformative Learning Conference attended by hundreds of progressive educators. It was displayed as part of a larger exhibit of transformative art, both personal and collective representations. The conference took place just weeks after September 11th, 2001’s terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre. Some of the other art reflected this. This display marked the first public discussion about the lanterns. It also marked the first time that I, in a joint workshop with two other arts-informed researchers, was able to speak publicly of my own experiences of violence and transformation and the role of art and artful inquiry in eliciting and integrating responses to trauma. The inclusion of the Holding Flames Exhibit in community with other forms of artful inquiry in this conference attended by scholars, social justice activists and educators from many places, as well as participants, gave it broader public visibility and academic validity. It also confirmed for me as its first curator that the pieces could be safely, respectfully and appreciatively viewed in this particular setting. When a long-term home for the exhibit was offered in the public gathering place within the Adult Education and Counselling Psychology Department, this option to dispersal of the lanterns was offered to all participants through a sheet distributed at the store’s second exhibit and through ongoing postings where the original invita-

tions were placed. All but four lantern-makers chose to maintain their pieces in ongoing exhibit. Several more fragile pieces⁸ placed off the screen were not included in the display. The curation is now less formal and shared by those who use the lounge space.

The third display returned the lanterns to the community gallery for their winter solstice event; there was again that sense of a safe and sacred site. One guest wrote; “All of the lights remind me of my childhood visits to the side altar of St. Vincent’s church where a light in front of the Baby Jesus statue drew me. I brought my child to this place. I sense the lanterns are a space for the “sacred child.”

Two years later, the lanterns’ presence in the graduate school of education continues to raise questions, inspire others’ arts-based research and provide a welcoming space to community meetings in the space. Having women’s artwork taking up such space in the centre of an academic institution makes its own statement. To quote someone who visited the first exhibit, this is “Transformation as Research, Research as Transformation!”

A Final Curator’s Note

Being participant in this exhibit has been a wonderful and unexpected opportunity for collaborative creative expression. Breaking out of some of the boundaries of therapy in bringing clients, colleagues, intimates, friends and friends of friends together in this way, has reaffirmed for me the power of community and the shared sense of the sacred that supports radical change in creative, boundary breaking and non violent ways.

This section ends with lines from Mary Ann O’Connor’s poem composed for and read at the opening of the Holding Flames Exhibit, the full text of which forms Appendix C.

What darkness wouldn’t yield its secrets
To the fire of a woman’s soul?

¹Bonnie Burstow's knowledge of ethical review processes and her commitment to the inclusion of marginalized populations in understanding women's health was invaluable. The use of the exhibit as public archival material has inspired other community arts-based projects such as a proposed study of what constitutes "home" for those homeless (Crowe, 2004).

²Artful inquiry is my term and will be used throughout the thesis to name the broad range of inquiry that uses individual, unique creative expression as epistemology.

³My classmates were invaluable in making this stipulation after some lanterns and consents arrived separately. Until two participants called and resolved the problem, there were briefly more lanterns than consents, threatening display completely since it would have been difficult without this to ensure consent for every lantern.

⁴Transformation is understood here as requiring the breakdown and reconstitution of dissipative structures.

⁵Sheila-na-gig means "fairy, or spirit woman, of the opening" in my Gaelic mother-tongue. These are carved figures, considered grotesque, of a woman holding wide her labial folds. Dating from medieval times, and found above church doors and castle thresholds, it is unclear whether they were intended to warn of the pleasures and dangers of female sexuality, to honour women as the opening to life, or to mark sacred boundaries. In my lantern, all these meanings are implied (see Section 4).

⁶Photographing and adjusting images (i.e., rotating, brightening, enlarging details, changing image sizes and display formats) has been an important part of the research process inspiring close exploration and constant new discoveries. A permanent record is part of the public archival process for my own and others' further learning.

⁷Her use of the term "Creator" produced negative comments from those who found the word too male and too Christian.

⁸These pieces, stored in the Transformative Learning Centre, are brought out for ongoing presentations about the Holding Flames Exhibit.

3. Illuminations

Incredible,
 Illuminating,
 Illustrious,
 Insightful,
 Involving,
 In,
 In,
 In

—Budd Hall, Guest Book, November 2001

Being in touch with the lanterns, documenting and journaling around the displays, reading guest-book comments and responding to personal artful inquiry, shed light on women's journeys of s/Self transformation in greater and greater depth. Illuminations in terms of worldviews, artful inquiry, the lanterns themselves and in terms of my own process of more integral understanding, unfolded and continue to unfold.

In Touch with Creation: Artful Inquiry in a Participatory Worldview

The Holding Flames Exhibit generates and exemplifies a deeply relational worldview, one that places us back amongst all our relations.

This sense of mattering in the larger arc of the cosmos, this knowing that we are all participant, active and responsible in shaping the world, this sense that each of our particular visions and actions shape the whole, is our source of meaning. Despite his exclusionary language, Albert Einstein (1949) captures the problematic and the path toward recovery of this denied deeply relational awareness:

A human being is a part of the whole called by us "the universe," a part limited in time and space. He [sic] experiences himself,

his thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and affections for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening the circle of understanding and compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. (p. 125)

To feel compassion for all that lives and to *be* reconnected to the whole of the natural world in all its aesthetic and erotic wildness, is also reconnecting with all forms of consciousness including Earth's consciousness and human collective unconsciousness (Zohar, 1990). Participatory consciousness encompasses human conscious and unconscious lived awareness of our particular place and moment in the cosmological web of life. Our consciousness is in continuum with our embodied unconscious, personal and collective. Participatory consciousness necessarily moves us toward emancipatory compassion for wholeness in the natural world, in others and in the personal self. While the focus of this piece is on art and artful inquiry, several core concepts of participatory understanding became clearer and cast light on the project at this juncture.

All life is interconnected at multiple levels and in ways more relational and complex than positivistic Newtonian scientific models of connection. At the level of quantum physics, we now recognise that, far from the predictability and control touted in modernism, events are acausal and alocal, that each particle and wave, each being and movement matters, and each can change the outcome and direction of all on each connection (Zohar, 1990). Our connections in Earth's biosphere produce unpredictable outcomes and effects at a distance, across human generations and within microbial earth life, for example. At the level of the microcosmos, we now know all life is equally evolved, that indeed "all life forms are meticulously organised sophisticated aggregates of evolving mi-

crobial life”; that far from some form of survival of the fittest, the most powerful changes affecting human and earth life happen through co-operation, that “life forms multiply and complexify by co-opting others, not by killing them” (Margolis & Sagan, 2001, p. 12). In terms of understanding human social organisation and evolution, this implies a paradigm shift toward what Catherine Keller and other feminist philosophers speak of as a hermeneutics of connection, of dialectic spirals of interpretation within the participatory awareness that all things are interconnected and co-constituting (Heshius & Ballard, 1994; Keller, 1995). Hierarchical assumptions of the lifeworld without holding this awareness of the participatory, lead to disregard and destruction of what subtends life including the life of the planet itself. Human beings, in this worldview, are not the top of any evolutionary tree. At the same time, they do have extraordinary powers and responsibilities within the web of planetary life, as a powerful and somewhat conscious community of subjects participant in its weaving and destruction.

Historically, awareness of participatory relatedness has been held in the arts and the artful. Artful practices appear to be at those body-mind-spirit levels that subvert and challenge the splitting dichotomies of modernist thinking. Art is integral and integrating, even in its representations of disconnections. I think of Hildegard of Bingen’s layered egg images of the universe, or of Rumi’s simple poetic words:¹

Your way begins on the other side
 Become the sky
 Take an axe to the prison wall
 Escape
 Walk out like someone suddenly born into colour
 Do it now

Our deep connectedness can also be held in story as well as poetry

and visual art. Late friend and science fiction writer Judith Merrill (2005) had a story that I still use often in therapy to foster understanding of our participatory interconnections and our shared agency with others. Merrill tells of how we may let many people into the main floor of our house, but relatively few into the basement; and that into the sub-basement, possibly only one or two might be invited over the course of a lifetime. What we may not always remember, she says gently, is that when we go down to the sub-sub basement, there are no walls. In revealing the depths of their personal journeys, the lantern-makers welcome us into those sub-sub basements of the creative, the dream and the archetypal.

Einstein (1949) talks of the optical delusion of human isolation, a delusion increasingly persistent and increasingly dangerous, evident in contemporary human practices that exert not just local but planetary effect. This is the delusion present in war, in the fragmentation of the planet’s health care and water conservation, in our profligate use of energy resources, in human contribution to species loss and in our daily treatment of the more vulnerable. At the same time, there are increasing surges of participatory thinking and action, shared planet wide with modern technologies. In the arts and in some areas of theory like relativity, chaos, quantum physics and cosmology, we are increasingly familiar with participatory understandings. On less theoretical levels of experience, the devastating tsunami in South Asia, the growth of planetary communications and peoples’ responses after September 11, 2001 are also undeniably participatory events and the delusion is weakening. We now can talk philosophically about causality and change as alocal and acausal, about our realities being changed by the very act of perception, about being mutually constituting, about hearing and seeing each other into being.

Einstein (1949) points out that it is compassion for others, not those alike or even sharing a place with us but rather compassion for those in ever widening ripples of difference, that heals the delusion of the separate self, fostering a more participatory worldview. Art has that capacity to

foster compassion, deep loving knowing, because it allows us to explore the spaces in between our experience and the other's. Its integrative nature also fosters *self* compassion, revealing and holding complex dynamic tensions of what is culturally labeled "good-bad." Artful representations have the creativity, meaningfulness and embodied presence to carry personal epiphanies, conscious and unconscious, that can be kept and slowly unpacked with loving recognition.

How Artful Inquiry Illuminates

Art, and more consciously artful inquiry, is a deeply embodied way of knowing. It is a way of revealing knowledge of the self to the self as the processes of lantern-making and viewing suggest. It is also more than a way of personal knowing. It can be a way of showing publicly in your community what you know, putting that out for others to resonate with and respond. Bertholt Brecht's (1992) metaphor that "art is not a mirror of reality but a hammer with which to shape it" (p. 21) speaks to the expository and shaping power of art. And yet like any powerful form of human expression, art has shaped and been shaped by post-industrial modernity.

"The paradigm of vision and the disembodied eye" is how artist and art critic Suzi Gablik (1991) describes the modernist epistemology with its myths of value-free aesthetics and inherently purposeless art-making. In *The Re-enchantment of Art*, she rejected that paradigm and called for us to join growing numbers of cultural creatives in making art "as if the world mattered." More recently, she gives many examples of "art which speaks to the power of connectedness and which establishes bonds; this 'connective aesthetics' that calls us into relationship, that is not about power"; she feels this embodies the feminine approach of opening up spaces for deep listening where groups previously excluded can speak directly about their experiences (Gablik, 2000, p. 43). Going to the deepest roots of our

interconnectedness, Gablik calls such art "art for Earth's sake."

Here I am using a broad definition of art as unique creative expression that is intentional to some degree and aesthetic at least to the art's creator/s. These representations are not limited to the specific forms judged and named as "fine arts" by a particular cultural elite with financial resources and access to galleries and media. Art in Western dominant cultures risks being commodified and dissociated from its original aesthetic roots in nature and from its shamanistic and indigenous roots as a form of knowledge-making and sharing. Only when "community" is put before "art" does it begin to return to its knowledge sharing and participatory roots (Barndt, 2004; Barndt & Lee, 2000). The current definition is similar to the way art is viewed and spoken of in indigenous and indeed in the majority of societies around the planet (i.e. as not to be separated from creative expression in daily life and community ritual). Defining art as unique creative expression, whether personal or communal, allows for inclusion of a broad range of personal experiences and personal truths, facilitating representation of deep subjectivity both conscious and unconscious.

When, as in the lanterns exhibit, those unique creative representations start with the same limited but highly flexible form (i.e., the wooden box), then one has both subjectivity and differentiation represented. When those unique and differentiated expressions are displayed in community and in public (i.e., the Holding Flames Exhibit), then both personal and collective subjectivity, differentiation and community can be represented.

Artful inquiry is the respectful, critical and contextualised exploration of those unique creative expressions from all those levels and, if the participants are diverse, places. This enables information about experiences from a diversity of personal and cultural histories to be revealed and included in fresh ways into knowledge-making. The specific modes or processes of artful inquiry will differ from project to project and researcher to researcher.² The current project uses the stages of heuristic inquiry as

described in the first section but in a critical and creative way. It involved my respectfully staying with, documenting in multiple formats, and understanding the artful “data” over the course of four years. I understood and perceived all the artful pieces, the lanterns, full exhibit, photographic record, guest book, personal art installations and DVD through my own particular skills and lenses. As a psychotherapist, client of therapy and educator of other psychotherapist, I was attuned to the personal dynamics represented and to recognizing and differentiating those from my own. As a social justice advocate and community activist around anti-violence and anti-oppression issues, I was particularly aware of violence, trauma and colonization in the representations. As a mother, a Northern Irish white woman from an ancient political family, a comparatively heterosexual and middle-class “scholartist” (see Cole, Neilsen, Knowles & Luciani, 2004), I could not help but be aware of relationships and the effects of power in relationships intergenerationally and critically in terms of forms of representation. Apart from these personal lenses which both inform and limit this analysis, this project draws on multiple and transdisciplinary literatures and the input from attendees to all four public displays of the Holding Flames exhibit as given in the guest book.

Inclusion of *any* forms of creative expression in knowledge-making, whether with the broad definition of art used here or the more culturally defined “arts” forms in other scholars’ artful research, can only render such knowledge-making more inclusive, imaginative and participatory, given the power of being in touch with creation. Those who question the validity of the current definition of art might consider this. Because participants in the Holding Flames Exhibit revealed themselves to me over the course of the displays, I know at least eight would define themselves as scholartists (i.e., those who consciously draw on artful expressions in visual art, poetry, dance, sculpture and fiction as central to their academic work), nine others have years of formal arts training not only in visual art but in dance and music, five have had no training nor have they ever before

made an artful piece and the majority who remain, fourteen participants, do not self define as artists but weave a variety of forms of creative expression into their daily work. For example, three are psychotherapists who draw on singing, dance and movement and cultural representations as part of their practice. Two participants are musicians. Two others are involved in editing different types of text, one an amateur fiddler, the other involved in high-grade artful publishing. I would challenge anyone viewing the lanterns to distinguish those who are formally trained artists from all the other cultural creatives involved in this exhibit. I would argue here that, whatever their backgrounds in creative expression, each lantern-maker artfully communicates key shifts in their lives that tell us much about complex conscious and unconscious aspects of s/Self transformation from their own perspectives.

Art reveals to others and to our selves something of each human being’s sense of her lifeworld, some manifest expression of her distinctive experience and perspective on that participatory continuum of consciousness or unconsciousness. As Rosie McLaren (2001) states, art “uses structural expression to give felt meaning to lived experience” (p. 62). In her piece on the loud silence of women’s menopausal years, she uses a pastiche of women’s artworks to define what Adrienne Riche calls a female consciousness which is “political, aesthetic, erotic, which refuses to be included or contained in the culture of passivity” (Rich, 1980, p. 18).

Women’s active artful expression is limited and devalued within popular culture. As the New York based feminist group, Guerilla Girrls, point out annually in their gallery report cards, women’s art forms but a small part of gallery collections, meaning that fewer pieces of their art are kept over time, and therefore less likely to become part of the *official*^B body of human knowledge. Women’s culturally assigned and inequitable responsibilities for the care of others both inspire and limit the time available to make art. When they do, women’s artful expression is often devalued as “crafts” or “hobbies,” rubbing out the extraordinary community-building

and communicative functions of quilting, or beading or wedding dress production (Church, 2001). That spirit-moving power is evident when women artists who are critically reflective use such disavowed modes of expression to make extraordinary cultural impact. One thinks of Joyce Wieland's gift to Trudeau of a quilted "Reason over Passion" or her use of a snowy frosted cake decorated with a tiny clubbed marzipan baby seal to challenge hunting.

Public showings of women's art are a powerful active challenge to dominant epistemologies that privilege certain forms and certain makers of knowledge. Seen in community, women's artful contributions to knowledge such as the Holding Flames Exhibit increase epistemological equity. Women expressing non-discursive experience in artistic forms provide a collective experience of great power, an ontological ground zero that is not merely socially constituted but embodied, sensory, and placed.

Art and artful inquiry are potentially emancipatory from formal accepted epistemologies, subverting man-made language and established patriarchal and imperialistic academic traditions. Artful display of diverse women's perspectives on their own experiences opens up shared space and voice for those marginalised. bell hooks (1995), writing on black women's personal and political transformation through art, comments; "It occurred to me that if one could make a people lose touch with their capacity to create, lose sight of their will and their power to make art, then the work of subjugation, of colonization, is complete. Such work can be undone only by concrete acts of reclamation" (hooks, 1995, p. xv). It is no coincidence that artful expression is active in social justice, revolutionary and liberation movements and that popular education and participatory action research value theatre, cartooning and community art projects. Art counters the kind of epistemological violence that values only certain kinds of knowledge. It opens up the possibility of a more inclusive knowledge-making community, one that can include those traumatized and disenfranchised, for example. For women and children this is important, given

their over-representation amongst those abused, violated, displaced and dominated.

Art also goes beyond the awareness of power differences and their effects. It can be a place beyond critical analysis into more creative and reparative exploration, envisioning alternative worlds and living like Starhawk's novels, Andy Goldworthy's installations or Mary Oliver's poetry.⁴ It may do so because of its communitarian and participatory aspects.

Mary Ann O'Connor (1999) suggests that women's creativity does not fit with the autonomous suffering "genius" standing outside the culture, the solo, generally male, model of western cultures. Women's creativity is more participatory even while necessarily culturally embedded and contextualised; for women, their creativity is an important avenue for self-differentiation *within* attachments. Like Lynn Margolis and Dorion Sagan (2001), Mary Ann O'Connor sees that there is always a link between creativity and co-operation; that all creativity, like creative evolution in the natural world, is built on co-operative rather than competing dynamics. The significance of creative expression, O'Connor suggests, is its importance in the exploration of human reciprocity and mutuality; in its being "erotic" in the full sense described by poet and essayist Audre Lorde (1984) as "a source of power and information within our lives that arises from our deepest and non-rational knowledge which offers a well of replenishing and provocative force to the woman who does not fear its revelation, nor succumb to the belief that sensation is enough" (p. 26). O'Connor echoes my own belief and that of other feminist therapists that cutting off creative expression is linked to "silencing the self" and depression in women (Jacks, 1991). Regular practice of creative expression is an effective way to gain self-empathy and empathy for others. In participatory terms, we are mutually constituting. Creative expression enables us to become more aware of the sensory, emotional and imaginative as well as the rational aspects of that complex process.

Because it is sensory and embodied, the process of art-making re-

quires us to slow down and pay attention in the moment. Like mindfulness or meditation, it can be a way to bring the embodied self and the *expressive* embodied self more fully into the now. Like mindfulness and meditation, art-making and artful inquiry necessitate attention and interaction with what is actually there, not with what one wishes was there. What is “there” is neither inside nor outside the skin-bounded self of artist or viewer but holding of both. With less linear representation such as visual art rather than text, what is “there” artfully can be less caught in time or space.

What is there *is* complex. It includes one’s materials and context, one’s personal embodied history and one’s expressive imagination in that moment. Thus, in the lantern project what we made was shaped to some degree by the strength required to cut through or effect the compressed layers of the plywood forming the original box. And it was shaped by the “box” of our own perceptions. The very process of the moment could transform the meaning of the piece. As you look through the lanterns, you will see the glass jar that one lantern-maker used to exemplify her personal transformation, burning up the whole structure of the box, keeping only the handle to hang the jar containing the ashes and a tea-light. The shattering of my own lantern structure during the later stages, required an acceptance of the flaws and a revisioning of where to place pieces that woke new understandings of the root experiences.

What art-making and artful inquiry provide is an engagement with realities while at the same time engaging the imagination. “The dream drives the action” was Jung’s description of the importance of the imagination in development and change. What we cannot envision we are less likely to move toward. Transformative learning theorists like John Dirxx (2000) and John Heron (1996) support the view that the ways we come to perceive and apprehend ourselves-in-the-world, in that more participatory sense, are fundamentally emotional and imaginative rather than rational, conceptual or linguistic. It is within the ecology of the imagination that sustainable rebalancing can occur and lead to action. One lantern-

maker conceived her lantern as a three part piece, a removable semi-transparent rounded cocoon or chrysalis in which rested the box collaged with photos, words and images, both of which sat in a nest of red dogwood branches. Only when the piece was displayed, did she and others see the egg in the nest that glowed with the life within. Since the initial installation, she has moved out of a financially supportive but creatively constraining marriage, written a short novel and short stories for publication and begun moving into a network of more mutual relationships.

Personally, art has, since childhood, been my way of holding and expressing issues too sensitive to speak of aloud and certainly never in public. What the lanterns project provided for me was a way to express and transform what was too painful, complex and lost for words. Artful play gives space for the ecology of the imagination to manifest both the grief and the movement forward that marks new growth especially if that growth is disrupted in childhood (Cobb, 1977).

When the lantern installation and the lantern-makers are seen within the artful participatory paradigm emerging here, we see Holding Flames as the representations of a community of active knowledge-makers showing something of what matters, both conscious and unconscious, in their own particular journeys of transformation. In doing so, they are also throwing light on processes of transformation at levels far beyond the personal.

Lantern Illuminations

Harvesting the richness and complexity of understandings held in the lanterns will be a lifelong project rather than a doctoral research stage. The exhibit lends itself to multiple readings. It is important to note that these first gleanings are from only one of the lantern-makers, though admittedly one with the privilege and responsibility for gathering, curating and displaying them. From each of their perspectives, other lantern-makers and future researchers may frame the knowing shown here very differ-

ently. The exhibit's openness to multiple interpretations and its capacity to generate questions is one of its strengths.

As I had stated on the invitation to participate, I did not analyse⁵ any individual lantern, relying instead on themes that emerged from the community of lanterns over time. The overarching themes or categories shifted and refined as I continually viewed, documented and grouped photographs of lanterns in different combinations and reviewed artists' statements and guest-book comments after each exhibit and each encircling of "data." The early categories were descriptive and many. They included "complexly relational," "diversely creative," "nature imagery," "self-reflective," "self talking," "art references," "indications of disruption," "conscious and conscious of the unconscious," "power literate" and "holding tensions." They became increasingly more inclusive and respectful of process as well as descriptive.

Only after being with the lanterns in many formats from 2001 to 2004, after reviewing the guest book, artists' statements, the literature and after completing the personal installations including "s/Self Transforming," did the themes below emerge. Indications of how those themes are embodied in the lanterns is given below and the lanterns are referenced by name. The lanterns illuminate three main interweaving themes in processes of s/Self transformation. Such processes of s/Self transformation are *participatory*, *multi-local* and *indigenous*; these distinctions are somewhat arbitrary since each relates to and throws light on the others.

By "participatory" in this context I mean that all our relations—our relationships with other human beings, institutions, species, and our life world—call forth our radical shifts, that when our personal self structures can no longer assimilate those evolving relations and remain coherent, there is disruption and profound change. All our relations co-constitute that transformative movement toward more coherent, integral, authentic and life-affirming living. Thus a psychotherapist, educator or elder is but one participant in the transformation of a woman's sense of self. For any

woman, her relationship with all parts of herself, her interconnections with family, intimates, culture, with her peoples intergenerationally and with her place in the natural world, are just as central in this multi-centric process.

"Multi-local" refers to the fact that transformations arise not just in individuals but in families, communities, peoples and places, as well as within institutions, structures of governance and relationships participant in transformational events. For example, the woman who transforms from the life constrictions of early childhood abuse is participant in a transformative event that may call forth radical change in herself, in her work that affects others in many communities, and possibly even in praxis at institutional levels in other places.

By "indigenous" I mean that processes of s/Self transformation are shaped by our human membership over time in Earth community. The land and the history of the peoples that birth each of us, shapes our awareness. Reconnecting with that land and history and with the natural world around us now is central to deep radical change. Being attuned (consciously or unconsciously) to our own participation in ecological processes⁶ also appears crucial to lantern makers' personal change.

Participatory and Multi-local

The participatory and multi-local aspects are presented together. As we saw in the section on participatory worldviews above, it is from many places and levels that beings co-constitute each other.

The deeply relational, that sense of ourselves as embodied, ephemeral and participatory beings in the cosmic web of life, is shown directly in many of the lanterns and evident in all. Every lantern holds and manifests some awareness not only of relationships on many levels, from quantum to cosmological, but of lantern-makers' active engagement in calling forth forms of life. What is held in these installation pieces are reciprocal rela-

tionships to the Earth, to self, to family, intimates, communities, to institutions, to animals, insects, reptiles, trees and stones, and to the universe. Even when relationship is one of self-made membraned distance, the relational is evident:



*I dreamed I was invisible
And walked among the people
And heard with my body
And was transformed. (Invisible)*

“Dancing waves, light waves, sound waves, all the same” (Feather) is a lantern interior that captures this relationality from many levels.



“Loving everything and everybody as represented by this earth” (Angel), said another whose angel figure topped a lantern box of soil.

The indigenous term “all my relations” captures this participatory awareness which encompasses much more than the family relationships familiar to human psychological discussions of self transformation. The medicine wheel and the teachings around the four directions in local native tradition are a way of representing the mutuality and interconnectedness of all of earthed life, human and more-than-human (Four Directions). Cultures hold this awareness, and its denial, in different ways. Its denial, so much a part of western industrial life and the global market economy, is becoming increasingly costly to the earth and its more vulnerable inhabitants (O’Sullivan, 1999; Spretnak, 1995). Each of us holds awareness of our relationships to others in ways shaped by our cultures and by the events in our particular lives. What is held in each and any one of these lanterns, made by women from many cultures, classes⁷ and ages, is awareness around personal change to a depth that affects *all* our relations.

The transforming nature of relationship with human others, includes far more than family. What we find here, in addition to the mother-child images one might expect, are relationships to institutions, like marriage, medicine, education and religion (Less-is-More; Flags; Sprung), to community (Council of Rabbits) and to peoples (Four Direction; Feather).

One lantern-maker points out the underlying participatory nature of ways of honouring the sacred, “all spiritual traditions are traditions of embodiment” (Feather) and captures the intergenerational spiraling of change; “A trilogy, a trinity, three women.” The same artist’s statement says “an old macaw gifted the feather” and speaks of being taught by the shifting wilds of Guyana and Canada. “At most meaningful thresholds of my life, whether in night dreams or day dreams, “I” am not the box/body/mass at all, it is just a doorway, an entrance, an end-trance” (Feather, artist statement, Appendix A).

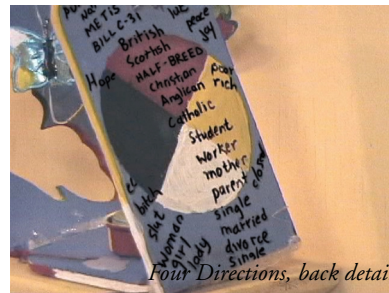
It is often in dreams and intuition that deeper understanding of our interconnections are found. In creative expression too, the participatory

arises; in “my fiddle and the music wave I surf when necessary” or “at the back of the box I am dancing, the closest I come to flying.” For some it is in the creative project of the lantern-making that this awareness arose. The Cactus lantern maker found reconnection with art and the natural world.



“My transformation included a desire to be more part of nature. I wanted to include a living thing.”
(Cactus artist statement, Appendix A)

“British, Scottish, half-breed, Christian, Anglican, Catholic, student, worker, mother, parent, single, married, divorced.” (Four Directions)



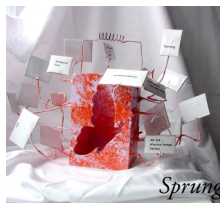
“I have nothing to be ashamed of.”
(Guts)

The process of transformation of the personal self held by these lanterns is of the held tensions between disintegration and reemergence in a deeply relational and participatory way. Flame and the tree images together hold our mutually constitutive nature in the web of our relationships (Ember; Tree; Child; Goddess). Like the tree’s branches and roots, we interrelate at echoing levels of form. Like the flame, we transform through the disintegration of old forms and emergence of what is life affirming. We see each other into being and into change.

One aspect of the multi-local and participatory nature of transformation is more integral relationship to the many parts of personal self. The inside of the Nest lantern has variously labeled photographs of its maker; the Frog-Up/Rabbit-Down lantern is made of two boxes. Of course, our attitudes and acceptance toward those various aspects of self are resonant with the social and cultural attitudes that surround us.

This detail from Four Directions lists 15 often conflictual cultural descriptors across and around the four directional medicine wheel. Also significant is the relationship to the multiple and changing aspects of the self over time. Other lanterns, like Nest, incorporated lists of roles or visual representation of conflicting or contradictory parts of the self [images frog down/rabbit up, flags, sprung], raising questions about the unitary and static image of the adult self in most theories of personality change underlying therapy. The relational self implied here is multiple, always in composition, swirling with contradictions held in creative tension and held in women’s bodies, not merely in their heads.

Women’s relationships to their *embodied* selves is particularly transformative and transforming. Women’s bodies, especially their blood, sexuality and childbearing are a core part of this deep relationality, evident in many lanterns (i.e., Mummy; Nest; Sanctuary; Woman-in-Time). Culturally imbued ambivalence, pain and struggle for self-definition are evident, in the use of the word “slut,” “struggling with sexual identity,” “a brave woman with a brain, voice and cunt.” “I have nothing to be ashamed



of” are the tiny words written almost invisibly on the top of one lantern (Guts). As these illustrate, many women appear to struggle with the good girl/bad girl assumptions internalized from culture, church and family. Resolving these and reclaiming the erotic⁸ appears to be a recurring sign of s/Self transformation, (i.e., for communities, cultures and peoples as well the personal self).

In many ways what I am talking about here is women becoming indigenous to their own bodies, returning to that sense that this is where they live, this Earth-formed entity. From my therapy experiences as well as the lanterns’ representations, it is when women can hold together many aspects of s/Self including those conflicted, fragmented, disavowed and dissociated, that they experience themselves as more whole, as fuller members of participatory Earth community.

Indigenous

In terms of indigenous knowledge, women used soil, stones, shells, feathers, leaves and living plants

to capture core elements of s/Self transformation. They also used representations of Earth’s waters and creatures, along with those of the planet itself. These appeared to be used literally as well as metaphorically. Trees literally sheltered; turtles taught slow covered movement and they birthed Turtle Island. The sense of ourselves as indigenous to Earth, indigenous to our own cultures and peoples, and with some struggle, to our own womanly bodies, appears often. There is little doubt that these are pieces by women and by women with some sense of the sacredness of women. Goddess-like forms, rounded mummy shapes, womanly symbols, children’s presence, artful and anatomically correct images of women’s bodies, all make themselves known.

The earth itself is shown in its planetary (Less-is-More; Sanctuary) as well as its human global representation as a travel map on the Woman in Time lantern. In more process ways, the dynamic energy of deeply ecological change is caught in various forms (Ember; Rainbow; Wave) and evident in the very transformative responses to the lantern box.

Even with the shared form of our human and embodied being, what is clearly represented in the lanterns is our diversity, the many distinctive and particular places from which each participant relates to the process of deep personal change and to each other. Starting with the box shape itself, participants engaged with and related to it in varying and unpredictable ways, some treating it as a miniature installation space (Child; Less-is-More; Mummy; Sanctuary; Woman-in-Time;), some as a text or canvas

(Council of Rabbits; Maths; Red Ribbon; Seed; Tadpole), some as metaphors for the self (Brook; Dragonfly; Ember; Flags; Flame; Invisible), and many as metaphors for the shape and constraints of their lives, to be opened, broken through, consumed or surmounted (Four Directions; Frog Climb; Frog Up, Rabbit Down; Handle; Nest; Puzzle Wizard).

Earth ecological processes of change are autopoietic, *self* unfolding, *self* determining and regulating. In the diversity of responses to the box form, the boxes themselves became ashes, cocoons, puzzles, brooks and goddesses. Most of these changes were not foreseeable, not specifically inspired by aspects of the original box. What they do have in common apart from their diversity is their emancipatory nature. Boxes are opened, smashed, burned up, and built around. This emancipatory transformative movement is also contained in artists' statements describing their use of the limitations and cultural embeddedness of the boxes as a metaphor for their own freeing from constraints and return to self governance (Doors and Windows; Mummy; Nest; Puzzle Wizard). As we will see in more detail in Section 5, what these women indicate they are transforming from are constraints, oppressions and the self-fragmenting, shaming, anxiety provoking and boxing effects of trauma.⁹



Jar

In a diversity of self-determined ways, the boxed self is freed to become more fully manifest in the world. Burnt, the box's ashes and handle are clearly seen.

More than deconstruction, what these pieces illustrate is *reconstruction* into radically different perspectives (Brook; Dragonfly; Mummy; Nest; Puzzle Wizard).

Like the delequese of the pupae prior to the emergence of the butterfly, after a period of breakdown in a safe and bounded place, the original elements of the self emerge as a very different living form.



Nest



Frog Climb, detail

The swaddled egg of creativity climbs above the waters in frog form toward the light.

A bone captained boat sails through the fires of transformation (Boat). Bone, silver, salt and stone are the meaningful elements of a earth changing visit to Baba Yaga's cave (Jaw).

There is acknowledged learning of steps on transformative journeys from the minute details and patterns of nature and the human body, all "full of even more mysteries and wonder than I ever thought possible ... miracles like fur, the shape of a maple key, the smell of pine needles" (Less-is-More). There is learning pace from the turtle, survival in arid environments from the cactus, unfolding self development from the tadpole. Night wisdom, sky wisdom and rabbit wisdom linger here (Council

of Rabbits), along with the wisdom of nest, chrysalis and cocoon (Nest).

From the gourd beloved by deep ecologists¹⁰ grows



"A tree woman with branches that burst forth and roots that delve down into the earth." (Mummy)

She is a woman who knows "clarity is a season—a leap plop spring dash" (Invisible) and that at any given moment, like the earth response of a tsunami or a new day, everything can change (Puzzle Wizard). She learns too from light and phases of the moon (Moon; Wave).

What comes through so strongly in the presence of the exhibit is the significance for s/Self transformation in returning to our Earth source.



"I was a waterfall, now I'm a brook." (Brook)

Participatory, Multi-local and Indigenous

The interweaving of participatory, multi-local and indigenous aspects of s/Self transformation is seen in women's creative and self-reflective processes.

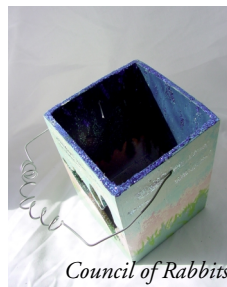
Whatever the reparative and supportive relationships that many indicated as significant to their process, radical change begins from within. The interior door handle (Handle), the openings to and from a vivid core (Doors and Windows), the swaddled egg (Frog Climb), the developmental stories shown on the sides of many of the lanterns (Cactus; Dragonfly; Nest; Seed; Tadpole), all illustrate the unfolding self-directed movement from the inside out.



"As one's eyes become accustomed to the new light, one re-examines a small, dark spot on the wall that had looked like a crack in the mirror... It turns out to be a door handle." (Handle)

Given each context, each life history brings its own elements into self transformation, thus any one-size-fits-all theory of transformative change or of therapy is problematic. Such theories are particularly so if they are directed by an outside expert rather than respectful of self-governance.

What *does* support this participatory, multi-local and indigenous process of radical change? There are some of the psychological elements illustrated, such as the loving presence of others, self acceptance, clarity and

*Council of Rabbits**Woman-in-Time**Mummy**Rainbow**Seed**Red Ribbon*

recognition of the constraints, grieving and becoming shameless, especially around embodied sexuality. What is woven through more prominently is the importance of relationship with the natural world and of being in touch with human creativity.

The relationship to the earth, to animals, to trees, water, stones, bones and the natural world shown here is active and educative rather than solely metaphoric or as a substitute for human connection which is the way psychotherapy theories tend to address it if at all. The grieving child is sheltered under a tree (Child), the pets are central (Less-is-More; Sanctuary), stones, shells and feathers are gathered and saved (Boat; Feather; Sanctuary; Woman-in-Time), the plants are alive (Cactus; Sanctuary; Wave), light matters (Doors and Windows; Luce). In nature we feel "welcome home" (Cactus).

As a therapist who works with survivors of trauma, I am continually reminded of the importance of this sense of home in the natural world. Most survivors of childhood abuse I have worked with have sought solace, safety and some sense of connection, in the natural world either literally or through stories or images. For many, it is in nature that a sense of ecstatic oneness with the universe, of being both tiny and mattering in the bigger scheme of things, is experienced. For many, being in the natural world, even of a city garden, is healing.

Creativity is also profoundly part of women's sense of interconnec-

tion and self development. In a paper building on Jean Baker Miller's (1986) reference to "the absolute necessity of cooperation and creativity" for women, Mary Anne O'Connor (2000) explores a transformative and relational approach to creativity, positing it as a social process in contrast to the solitary suffering male genius, as an avenue for differentiation within attachments and as another "missing discourse of desire." There is some sense of ambivalence around manifesting the lantern-makers' own creativity. It is woven through the artist statements (Mummy; Puzzle Wizard) and could be heard in comments accompanying the lanterns as they were returned. "I have been collecting pieces for so long, yet I needed encouragement, a push, to actually sit down and put it together"; "This is the third version of this one!"; "It's been finished for ages but I've found it hard to bring it in, to let go of it." Many participants expressed thanks at the support for their own creative expression and for the opportunity to express creatively with others.

*Flags**Dragonfly**Tadpole**Doors and Windows*

Despite their ambivalence, lantern-makers' creativity shines out in each piece. Art, music, and dance are also named and represented in various ways on the lanterns (Feather; Less-is-More; Maths; Mummy; Woman-in-Time; Puzzle Wizard; Doors and Windows). Images from art, from Georgia O'Keefe's flowers, Mary Cassat's mother and daughters, and Henri Matisse's circle dance to name but a few, abound (Doors and Windows; Feather; Maths). Art not only enables rich depiction of the processes of personal transformation, it appears to also inspire it. Not all the artful images are painterly. Some are caught on jewellery (Feather; Mummy; Sanctuary) and some, like the meticulous medical illustrations of body parts hidden deep inside one piece (Nest) are metaphoric as well as artful.

Certain images are repeated verbally, visually and metaphorically ... waves (Brook; Guts; Wave), birds and their feathers (Feather; Nest; Red Ribbon; Sanctuary). These suggest to me freedom of movement in communal relation with others, like rolling tides and wheeling flocks. However, I do not assume that this is the meaning held for those who participated. Creativity applies to meaning-making also.



Frog Climb

Indeed, what is clearly to be learnt from the juxtaposition of the lanterns and their statements is that the same symbols, like the shattered mirror used on several pieces, have very different meaning for different participants.

For one, the mirror fragments hold the sense of the multiple perspectives in reality (Cactus), for another, the scattered parts of her own perspective (Frog Climb) and for others, deep reflection (Handle; Wave). For those fostering self transformation, the implications are clear. Co-explore. Do not assume meanings are shared.

"Reflections within reflections."
(Wave, artist statement, Appendix A)



Waves

"I broke the mirror because I feel that a single reflection implies a reality or certainty that I don't believe occurs." (Cactus, artist statement, Appendix A)



Cactus

Doors and windows, empty and full spaces, visible and invisible spaces, various representations of boundaries and degrees of accessibility to the self are another recurring theme. The need to be seen and to hide are frequently in tension (Doors and Windows; Invisible; Nest; Woman-in-Time), not surprising in a culture where, for women, to be looked at, is to be judged rather than fully seen and where times of separation or solitude may be necessary to maintain or reclaim what is authentic to the self.

What these representations of boundaries tend to confirm is recent feminist therapist writing on the flexibility and membrane quality of self boundaries for women and of their use of more inflexible boundaries as something to push off from, frequently moving toward self discovery in avoiding or resisting constraint (Ettling, 2000; Jordan et al., 1991).

Reflection, including self reflection, is evident not only as part of the lanterns (Cactus; Dragonfly; Frog Climb; Handle; Wave) but is described in artist statements (Angel; Feather; Mummy) and implicit in the very act of participating in the project. Humans' capacity to reflect on their lives as a form of learning is central to the process of s/Self transformation and to transformative learning generally. This is how we become more conscious. Yet the hectic pace and constant, frequently assaultative, demands of life in industrialised nations, leave little time for mindfulness.

From several of the statements (Angel; Doors and Windows; Handle; Puzzle Wizard), good psychotherapy seems helpful in providing not only encouragement and regular committed time for reflection but also some corrective to self-punitive introspection. The humorous juxtaposition of "She keeps her own counsel" on the bright exterior of one rabbit box, with the dark starlight council of many rabbits within, could be echoing that need for support or/and the fear of judgement from a familiar internal chorus (Council of Rabbits).

Self talk, gentle messages to the self from the self, are everywhere and clearly a counter to messages from family, cultures and communities.. "I have nothing to be ashamed of." "Cut the cord." "Imagine the possibilities." "Ask for the respect you deserve." "I AM a person."

Humour and whimsy appear as part of reflection (Doors and Windows; Less-is-More; Nest; Puzzle Wizard). As I have found in therapy and in teaching, humour can provide a perspective that enables painful truths to be held and seen. The child's whimsy and need for play, precursor to adult humour, comes through vividly on pieces (Cactus; Frog Climb; Less-is-More).

Grief is also part of deep reflection (Child; Doors and Windows; Guts; Nest) and as writers on trauma recovery and transformative learning suggest, necessary for recovery and change (Herman 1992; O'Neill & O'Sullivan 2002).



Guts, back detail



Puzzle Wizard

Oceans of tears precede the honouring of one's gifts (Guts, detail) and the solving of the puzzles of one's past (Puzzle Wizard).

Feeling sadness at what has happened and at what has never happened in one's life, unlike the grinding emptiness of depression, enables movement forward.

Critical reflection is evident in some images.



Less-is-More

"Most kids in the world feel lucky if they have even a soccer ball to kick around and if I see the Wal-Mart ad again where the woman is 'collecting toys' I think I'm gonna hurl."
(Less-is-More, artist statement, Appendix A)

There are artifacts of men's violence, the tank and the bullet. There is also critical awareness woven into instances of recovery of one's own sexuality as part of s/Self transformation (Flags; Nest; Sprung). Some statements and images express awareness of social justice issues more directly (Flags; Less-is-More; Red Ribbon).

My own reflective time with the lanterns at home and in installation brought new insights. As I look at them, some group together like chattering birds on adjacent perches. One of the synergistic surprises in doing short-term psychotherapy was how the women I was working with at any one time became a mutually informative group in my head. I could see how one's description of an experience shone light on the dynamics of another's. The words or metaphor from one often found a way into sessions with an other because they were so apt. The respectful and careful sharing from one woman to another while maintaining confidentiality seemed helpful in breaking the isolation of emotional pain.

Thus, with the lanterns, the word "Guts" on one (Guts), makes more vivid the courage of the bright figures out front on another beside it (Less-is-More). And the reaching out figure on one (Tree), pulls recognition of the same reaching out beyond the form to be seen on many others (Angel; Ember; Frog Climb; Sanctuary). What is more, those viewing the installation have made comments in the guest book and in private communication in therapy that the lanterns speak to each other and to them, inspiring further change. One client who had been stuck in inchoate grieving, after seeing a luminous star of David on one lantern, recognised her own inability to make public any indication of her Jewishness. A child of Holocaust survivors, core parts of herself had remained hidden in terror, a stance confirmed by her experiences of anti-Semitism as an adult. Another client identified with two other very different lanterns, both made by women like herself who had from childhood kept hidden parts of themselves in attempting to find safety in regimes of terror. It gave her new ways to speak of her experiences and the courage to be more open about her sexual

identity. Viewers' awareness of that synergistic energy for change is noticeable in guest book comments; "My wish for myself is to become more of a soul rebel, soul adventurer like them." "Inspiring." "It gives me courage to be in such company"; "This is courageous sharing of transformation that touches us all." "Every piece had a different message, different meaning, different shape, but they all touch my soul; they give me a sense of being part of the universe."



Some group together like chattering birds on adjacent perches.

In conclusion, what is woven through women's journeys of change as revealed by their creative representations and reflections is what is held in the flames, that is the multi-centric and mutually constitutive and indigenous nature of human being and of s/Self transformation. Not only do we see, hear and love each other into being, but our sense of ourselves can be fragmented and disavowed in the web of our relations with others,

interpersonally and culturally. The images and symbols of our families and our cultures both shape our sense of our selves and can in turn be shaped by us in ways that then change ourselves and others. Reflection, including self reflection, can repeat old patterns of oppression or provide new and embodied mindfulness that brings radical change in those patterns (Rainbow) as swiftly as turning on a dime (Woman-in-Time).

¹Hildegard of Bingen's images can be seen in "*Illuminations of Hildegard of Bingen*: (1985). Rumi's poetry throughout the text is from "*The Essential Rumi*" (1995).

²One scholarist who viewed the Holding Flames exhibit then did her own exploration of my process as the researcher by interviewing me and then using artful representations in a sandbox to represent the various stages and underlying processes of this inquiry (with permission from Brenda Weinberg, therapist and doctoral candidate, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto).

³Much artful knowledge is of course held *unofficially* in our stories, landscapes, myths, poetry and music.

⁴See Starhawk's novels, *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993) and *Walking to Mercury* (1997); Mary Oliver's poetry in *Dream Work* (1986) and *American Primitive* (1983); and Andy Goldworthy's photographs in his book, *Passage* (2004).

⁵While not directly analyzing or interpreting any individual lantern, naming lanterns (from artists' statements or visual cues) and placing them in particular contexts *is* a form of interpretation. More participatory processes, i.e., re-engaging with lanternmakers to choose own names, specify own meanings etc., was not possible within the ethical limitations of research on public archival materials with no human subjects.

⁶Such processes include interdependence *and* self-determination, diversity, flexibility, feedback loops, life movement as continuous and cyclical,

and long-term change/evolution through collaboration (Capra, 2002).

⁷Each participant in making themselves known, shared pieces of their life history and current living situation.

⁸"Erotic" is used here in Audre Lorde's (1984) and Susan Griffin's (1995) sense of that reclaimed embodied awareness that makes vivid all of everyday living.

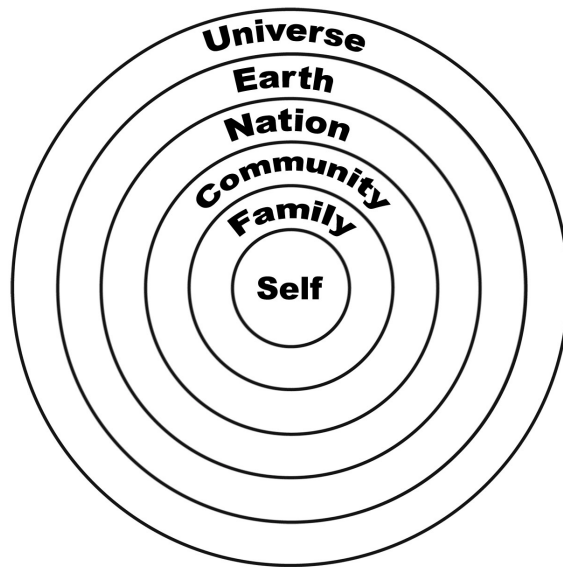
⁹Trauma is explored in more detail in Section 5. It is understood here as broader than *and* including the personal, i.e., racism, colonisation and anti-Semitism are more collective traumas.

¹⁰"The cultivated plant furnishing the womb in which all more elaborate agricultural systems developed; in African mythology, the horizontally-halved gourd symbolises the whole universe, the upper half sky, the lower ocean and the earth a smaller gourd floating within the lower half" (LaChapelle, 1988, p. 273).

4. Up Close and Personal

Spiralling Closer

What follows below is a visual record of the emergence of the triple spiral heuristic for the multi-local, participatory and indigenous nature of transformation revealed by the exhibit. Self, including personal self was clearly the starting place for profound change. And yet “self” is also meaningless and indeed non-existent outside of relational context, including our planetary context. For this reason, I began by drawing on indigenous educator Gregory Cajete’s (1994) illustrations of the concentric circles¹ of our human multi-local and ecological contexts.



Cajete’s circles were inspiring but, for me, too reminiscent of a target and too static. They did not capture the spiraling processes through those contexts. Adding a spiral² made some difference.

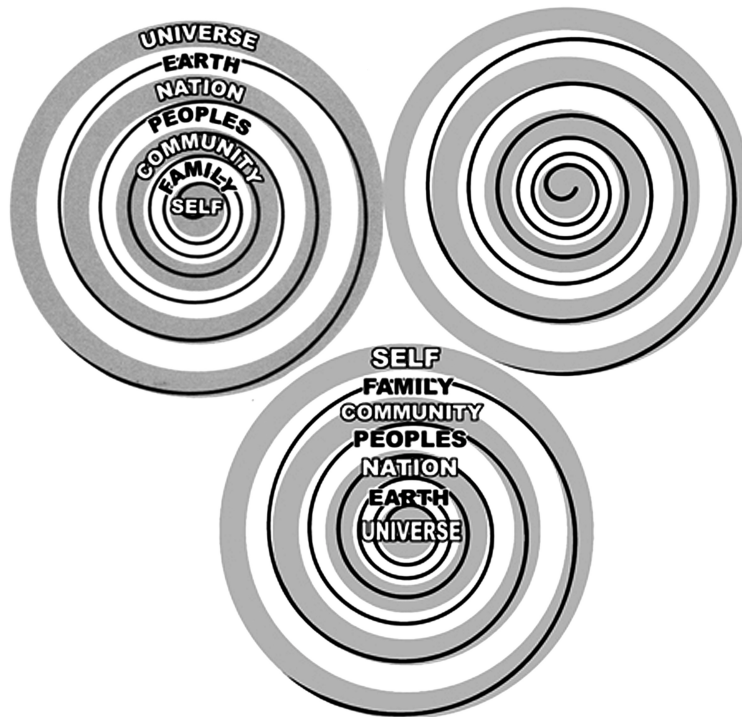


Legend: “Self” is the personal self, meaningless outside of nested contexts of “Family” (or kin by blood, adoption, marriage and negotiated co-habitation), of “Community” (initially extended family and neighbours and now more chosen reciprocal relationships of care), of “Peoples” (or bloodline such as Celtic or aboriginal), of “Nation” (which here stands for peoples with a shared land-base rather than an externally imposed and arbitrary “nation state”), and of “Earth” (our shared planetary context set within a time developmental “Universe”).

The figure above is of concentric circles of self-evolution, the nested worlds of context in which each of us lives and develops. In the context of the universe lies Earth, in the context of that, various land-bases/nations, and within those, peoples, communities, and families. This is personal self, centred in the universe like every other being in Earth community and this is personal self no more central than any other self in this multi-centred, multi-local universe. These circles can be recognized as holons, (i.e., coherent self-governing wholes at differing levels of organization) (Wilber, 1995). As such they are co-constituting with every other peoples,

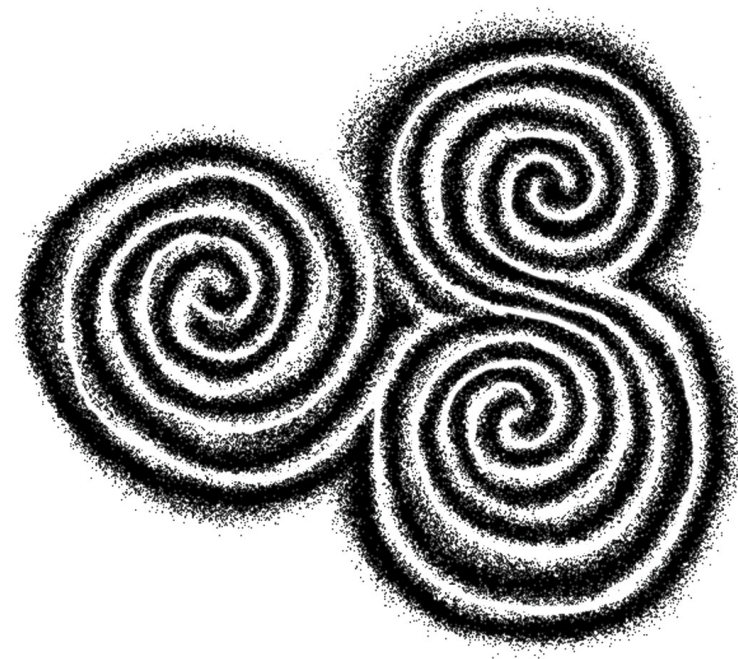
communities, families, personal selves, bioregional areas and planets.

This very abstract and intellectual understanding became more complex when I realized that, given the multi-centricity of this participatory universe, *any* level might be central and that the universe was in the self as much as the self in the universe. Multi-centricity had to be represented.



Only after working with this image for many months did I come home to my own indigenous knowledge, to the image from my peoples that held all of that information and complexity in a more dynamic and

generative way. The triple spiral carved into the interior of the Newgrange Mound in Ireland's Boyne Valley held all of this and more and became the heuristic at the core of this work.



Moving Into the Next Encircling

Moving closer to my own lantern gives a more embodied sense of the unfolding and integrating power of artful inquiry through these multiple contexts.



Sanctuary

Sanctuary

The little girl is seen through the remnants, the opened-up reminders of the original man-made wooden box. I am four and a half here, and my world is about to change. I am a very white-haired little girl, curls bleached by years of sun in Cape Coast, a village in Ghana, equatorial West Africa, where my father had come as a teacher with the White Fathers, arranging for my reluctant mother, six week old brother and my toddler self to follow. This is a vivid teeming wild place with very few white people. It is my homeplace until twelve. The monkey in whose gaze and full body hug I am revelling, is a holding matrix and comforter in the glorious intensity and danger of my life-world.

The photograph, one of hundreds taken and developed by my creative but art disparaging father, is set in a wall of stones, shells and coral pieces from Ghana, Ireland, the Greek islands, Mexico, Costa Rica and Ontario, all the wild and cultured places shaping me. The wall is hand-made, fit together like the stone walls still common as boundary markers in my birthplace, Northern Ireland, and in Ontario's pre-Cambrian shield lake lands where I spend time. The original wooden box is cut open into a garden-like sanctuary, the light sunk into the earth. The remaining wooden structure is wound with growing thyme. The barely recognisable box is set in an earthenware pot that hung on the wall of my therapy office since I started my practice there ten years ago. It hung in the centre of the wall where I envisioned the hearth-places of my clients. I have painted the pot like Earth seen from space, holding some sense of the cosmological, of self in the universe, universe in the self.

Visible high on the stone wall is a guardian angel, a protective, ever present friend from my Catholic childhood. What she guards is my heart. A slightly more ambiguous impish figure, a curvaceous erotic porcelain fairy, is also visible. Creatures capable of flight, whether mythopoetic or in the natural world, hold magic and hope for me, for many cultures. The

dragonfly touching down honours the natural world as well as echoing the symbol of renewal cut-out from the original box, like memory. The small brass container full of the coloured flight feathers of wild birds may be recognisable to some as a Winchester shell, one large enough to kill a human being. It would seem there are long lasting signs of something less than safe in this sanctuary, when one moves in close.

In front of the sanctuary structure, concealing the fracture that happened as I bore out space for the light, is a hand-carved bone sheila-na-gig. "Sheila-na-gig" means "woman of the opening" in my Gaelic mother tongue. It is the name for the hundreds of trickster-like female figures with self-opened labial folds found carved above ancient church doors and on fortress walls all over Ireland and parts of the British mainland. There is scholarly debate on whether these figures warn of the evils of female sexuality or honour women as the opening to life. Modern Irish feminists have reclaimed the figures as symbols of women's place in the sacred. Only the curious might notice the wound in this particular figure's sex, a tiny vulval redness. The bone figure has been almost impossible to secure in place and has fallen and broken several times. All of the lantern, except the bullet, is of natural materials and will eventually return to the earth like myself.

Behind the Lantern: A Detective Story

There were many clues of something awry shortly after the time this photo I use in the lantern was taken. I smashed my nose, split my forehead and broke my pelvis in the following year, all accidents, the only ones in my life before or since. Then there was my odd response to dangerous situations, apparently fearless during the bombings and shootings that marked my university years. Given my first job was a welfare officer in both the Catholic and Protestant districts alight with violence, this was interpreted as a strength. It was only after marital separation and several years of therapy

that the four year old on my lantern burst back into consciousness. Triggered by a newspaper article about a father who tried to murder his toddler's sexual abuser in the courtroom, I fell into grief, unsure what had happened but dreaming nightly of my dismembered body rushing from the ground into vivid life. In images and sensations, I began to recover memories of being sexually abused by the steward-boy who was my caregiver during childhood in West Africa.³ My only memories of that period were written in my body, in the bones. And only through the spiraling layered process of recovery over the next five years did I begin to make the complex connections between my mother's emotional absence through depression, that time of increased racism as Ghana became independent and my own anguished silence about my adolescent black male abuser. He disappeared abruptly after a row with my explosive father and by the time I had been sent away to school in Ireland at eight, the memory was gone.

Thirty years of dissociation should have been another clue that this was not yet the full story, despite the revelations uncovered in that first therapy. Dissociation is the compartmentalisation of memories so that they are inaccessible, held apart from the rest of one's consciousness. It is an effective coping strategy for intense pain, especially when embodied. Recovering some of those memories and working through the healing process with a wise, warm and creative therapist, did transform my life and all my relationships. It transformed my framework for therapy and my daily praxis more than any of my concurrent graduate school training and placements. What it did not fully transform was my relationship with my self in the context of my own theory-making and ways of knowing.

The clues in my lantern, made in spring 2001, were enough to begin to stir again the ghosts of almost 50 years buried in my body. By the summer, I was in pain. My back, hips and shoulders ached deeply. I could not support myself for long. I had battled fibromyalgia for years but this was more intense. I had deep body tension and bone pain. The tension

increased during my teaching a summer course on strategies for stopping violence against women and children. By now I recognised what was happening so, while very uncomfortable, I was not as terrified as in the past. I knew I was back in a traumatised state, sleeping poorly, waking frequently with my mind racing. Driven to write, I was unable to do so. Hundreds of scattered notes on bits of paper accumulated. Attempts to integrate the notes led to chaotic thinking and self-loathing.

Making and looking at my lantern, which I had named "Sanctuary," unearthed further concrete information. I could see there were still walls there under the thyme, still something to do with armed violence and flight, that was expressed but unclear. I knew intuitively it had something too to do with the sexual abuse and with my bones. The most obvious clue to what was still so disruptive was the way I treated my self as I made the lantern and dealt with others' exhilarated responses to the installation. I was driven and not in pleasant ways. Nothing I was doing was right. My lantern would never be finished. I was too slow, too awkward, too impatient, too intense; it was too personal, too revealing. In the anti-violence course I was teaching, I was not communicating what needed to be said in the course, not responsive enough to the pain and tensions of my students stirred by the materials. It went on and on, a stream of roofbrain chatter that heightened the body tension and made it difficult to enjoy my recognisably wondrous life.

It was August when I realised what my body already knew. I had been immobilized by a jarring accident. I had run away from my abuser up an iron ladder that rose 16 feet straight up the outside of a water tank perched on the hill behind our bungalow. The rusty ladder came away as I reached the top. I was slammed to the ground with the ladder across me. The steward-boy had pulled me out from under the ladder when my father arrived and raised me to my feet. My pelvis was broken. I was unable to walk. I remained strapped to a surfboard for about two months. I was immobilized, my body wrapped in cloth like a mummy to prevent my

motion. The monkey was gone, eaten overnight by soldier ants as she slept tied to a box in a tree near the compound. I was without comfort and unable to comfort myself. During that time the sexual abuse continued. I was reliant on my abuser for even the most basic of care, toileting. I did not speak. My distress was presumably seen as due to my injuries. Eventually I had to relearn to walk ... toe-heel, toe-heel, toe-heel ... like a robot. I was not in my body. I could not bear to stay.

It is human inhumanity to others that fragments us. Natural events, however horrific, have a different effect. Human inhumanity whether as childhood sexual abuse, systemic racism or colonisation, environmental degradation or enforced poverty, wounds at the mind-body-spirit level. It becomes traumatic when we are caught inescapably in a painful situation which overwhelms our usual coping strategies. Our sense of the whole, of the participatory, of our place in life's meaning, is shattered. Deeply imprinted in our cells, the effect of trauma remains long after the events (Van der Kolk, 1988).

Beginning not only to use, but to honour, the deeply held knowing that emerges in forms of artful expression, my own and others, opened up in me tender areas, old wounds that, like necrotic tissue, needed probing and clearing out for healing. The lantern project and the making of my own piece, reintroduced me to an earlier grounded child self whose whole being was in relation to a world experienced as wholistic, whose whole being was attuned to the feel, touch, smell, sights, rhythms, and intensity of what was going on around her including the terror and anxiety of others. She/I was a being who needed comfort. Daily walks and physical contact with my beloved dog helped. I bought myself a soft toy monkey and began to address the arthritic damage evident on a bone scan which revealed activity along my spine, hips and shoulders that formed the shadowy shape of an enlarged ladder segment. The art put me in a different place, painful, often deeply sad, but less heady and more able to be more actively present in the moment.

¹An example of Cajete's concentric circles is given in more detail on page 126 in Section 8 on s/Self Transforming.

²Spirals and circles move in different directions in the traditions of various indigenous peoples, some clockwise and some counter-clockwise. What is interesting in the Irish triple spiral (and rumoured also to be found in the ancient African city of Great Zimbabwe [Westwood, 1987]) is that both directions are evident.

³The stewardboy, my parents and myself were caught in a web of complex oppressions including colonization, misogyny and child abuse. It was a system where my parents had no qualms leaving my total physical care in the poorly-paid hands of a male teenager because all whites had stewardboys and, in my case, Ghanian women did not work in the house jobs, positions with high prestige in the local colonized society.

5. Caught

Art is the antidote that can call us back from numbness, restoring the ability to feel for another. By virtue of that power, it is political regardless of content. (Kingsolver, 1995, p. 232)

Cataclysm!

I was in an emotional state opened up by making and displaying my lantern. That may be why I retreated so deeply¹ when fundamentalist Islamic terrorists flew two hijacked planes full of passengers into the towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. It was a sunny bird-filled Monday morning early in September 2001 just after my first arts-based inquiry class. I could watch the news only sporadically and intensely. I went numb, automatically responding to and comforting others' fear. I did not see my own terror. I saw clients. I talked with them and felt some of what they felt. I talked for hours with my family, friends and colleagues but felt little of my own internal landscape. I had moments of almost suicidal despair when some of those closest were themselves numbed or seemingly dismissive of what was awry. I was waking every night, soaked in clenched embodied terror. Each time I woke with the sound of planes high overhead and the acrid warning smell of burning² plastic in my nostrils.

It was not just the horror of the thousands dead and missing that overwhelmed me, but the lethal determination of those young pilots prepared to sacrifice unknown lives to their cause. What shook me even more severely was the swift call for revenge, for a "terrorizing" war against terrorism. It was the talk of crusades, of "infinite justice" by armed might, the continual rants of "we" and "them," of being "for us or with the terrorists," that absented me into numbness. Not until the subsequent weekend, when I was alone in the wild lake-lands north of Bancroft and away from the battering information of the media, was I able to be aware of Earth's fragile beauty and to erupt in howling grief at the threat to all that is holy, *wholely* sacred. I knew at once that we³ were seeing a new level of

boundary violation. Violence was escalating from several places at once. What linked the men behind this escalation was belief in violence and domination as a means for producing change. Islamic terrorists and the American administration shared this belief that would have traumatic and devastating effects amongst many other human beings and species around the world. I was scared, scared to die and scared of the death of all that was sacred around me.

I found a mussel shell in the lake. Using gray watercolours, I painted the outline of the Towers inside the shell. The painting provided a way for me to look at and to feel my own response to what had happened. Like grit in an oyster, it raised a whole realm of emotions. Adding to Barbara Kingsolver's (1995) notion of art as an antidote to numbness, I would like to suggest, more particularly, that the self-reflective processes of artful inquiry, also have the power to restore our ability to feel for ourselves even as we feel for others around us and that this process is also profoundly political, bringing down our earlier meaning-making structures, breaking isolation and sparking transformation.

Painting inside the mussel shell opened up and released the memory of the recurrent dream that had been waking me every few night hours since the news of September 11th broke.

I am in the plane heading straight for the Towers, clear, glistening in the sunlight and close enough to be unavoidable. I am the pilot looking out of the cockpit, carrying all the grief and sense of responsibility for those with me, my skills useless in this moment. I am the passenger, strapped down and cowering, feeling small and utterly helpless, mouth open but utterly voiceless. I am the terrorist, fierce and driven in my belief that what I am doing is necessary, matters, will make a difference. I feel the power in being terrifying. Far less clearly, I am aware of my own terror and inevitable death. Swerving like a bird in flight toward the Towers and death, I am also the plane, carrying all within. Some part of me watches all unfold.

The feelings stirred by this swirl of selves, terror, rage and despair, took time to unpack. By late October, with the help of a new therapist, Jean,⁴ I began to recognize how distressed and fragmented I was. While I was active and optimistic publicly, doing therapy, participating in peace forums and making links with women in Afghanistan and New York, personally I felt I was still heading toward those Towers and some form of self-destruction. My thought processes were hijacked. I was speaking publicly about countering terrorism and at the same time I was being driven toward writing the dissertation as if there were a gun to my head. I felt that if I did not write I would die. If I continued to write as I was doing, I would die. I knew I was caught in a self-destructive process.

The root of that self-destructiveness did not become clear to me until I created two small pieces of art during a meditation retreat two days before the Transformative Learning Conference that was to take place at the beginning of November. I call them the “Eye” pieces since they fill wooden oval frames like the view from inside my head.

The left eye piece echoes the twin tower image painted in the mussel shell and captures some felt sense of my terrifying dream. Here, the Towers became two “i”s, small case personal pronouns, as I painted. “I” in English is the only personal pronoun capitalized. This marks the centrality of the individual in the culture and of the ego in the individual. The little sketch with its tiny plane heading for those “i”s is a view that shook my foundations even as I painted. For all my feminism, all my diversity of cultural experience, my “I,” my personal sense of identity, remained visibly caught in bringing down the dichotomised towers of western thinking. I was struggling with understandings of bad/good, black/white, inside/outside, body/mind, scholarly/artful, Irish/Canadian, terrorist/freedom fighter, crazy/sane.

There is fear and clarity that comes with knowing what *is* self-destructive. I saw clearly that without a more integrative approach to my doctoral work and my relationship to myself, I would, at some deep level, self-destruct. I could see no way in the moment to turn aside.



Eye pieces

The eye piece on the right paints me as the artist in the familiar landscape of Mallard Lake in its fall splendour. This brings comfort. What I can see in this image is that growth and renewal lie in what dies, in the turning leaves and boggy wetlands. The details, painted speedily with watercolour that thickens in the frosty air, opens up a broader vista. There is joy as well as pain in being where I am and deep recognition that solitary space and art making are necessary for my healing.

The pieces together provide purpose and vision. They enable me to look at what I am doing in that dream, as I fly into those Towers. I am pilot, passenger, terrorist, observer and plane. There is the responsibility of knowing what will happen without a change of course, along with the helplessness and sense of paralysis that comes with being strapped in place for the inevitable destruction. But there is also a sense of mattering. I am compelled to record all I see for others to witness what is happening. These selves are locked in the plane, screaming, muttering and mouthing in soundless cacophony with each other. The observer too is caught both in that plane and outside against the curve of the horizon soaring amongst the birds in the salty air. What this releases is enormous rage, grief and energy for action.

It is the terrorist inside me that frightens me most and upon whom I am driven to focus. In a distorted effort to protect what is vulnerable creative and Earthed, this part holds me hostage. I do not identify as a killer despite thirty years of dissociation and feeling responsible in the death of another.⁵ I understand in that moment that whatever destruction occurs in bringing down those Towers, is necessary for radical change. Even outside of the dream, I feel an odd compassion for those young men who flew to their deaths in killing others. I am less puzzled and appalled by this when, in a phone conversation, Thomas Berry acknowledges that, if there had been no loss of others' lives except his own, he too might have considered that action (personal communication, November 16, 2001). We do have to bring down what threatens Earth life in all its complexity,

even at the risk of our own; that is the Great Work (Berry, 1999).

The line between "freedom fighter" and "terrorist" is blurred in my family and in my cultural history. In the dream, I recognized that I am both compassionate toward and terrified of the terrorist in me. To quote Martin Buber (1970 [1958]), "the further from the end you envision are the means you use, the further you will be from the end you envision." Intellectually I know that freedom cannot rely on terrorism, that it is *powerful*, not violent, resistance that is needed when we are coerced. Violence and the threat of violence, however protective, rob the most vulnerable of speech and clear thought. As I try to write, some parts say; "Do what we say or you will be shot through the head." "Think this way." "Notice what we tell you to notice." "Consider your life in these ways." "Do not think outside of your particular box." I internalised the threat, holding the gun to my own head.

Communally Held Roots of Terrorism

I wear the face of my British colonizer. This gives me privilege. I was able to immigrate quickly and quite easily pursue professional training as a psychotherapist. I am able to sit amongst those who threaten me, without detection. Women of colour understandably⁶ become angry when if I speak about my people's experiences of colonization knotted with their white privilege. Yet my privilege has been what Andrea Dworkin (1991, p. 40) calls "the slack in the leash," enabling me to act against my terror while still firmly held by it. For the first time that November 2001, at the Transformative Learning Conference, I spoke openly about armed violence in my family and the role of art in breaking the silence about this.

Later that month, I sat at a lunch-time meeting of the Empire Club, an ultra-conservative organisation, using tickets passed on by an Irish friend, a fellow feminist and international banker. My 26-year-old daughter came with me. We listened to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in

Tony Blair's British government speak, surrounded by the heads of large Canadian corporations, Canadian military and police leaders. This woman with a working-class accent made it clear that Britain and other European colonial powers were touting greater armed presence as the way to stop terrorism, despite thirty years of unsuccessful military occupation of Northern Ireland. I wondered at my friend's quirky sense of humour. She knows well that I am from a Republican family.

My grandfather was a messenger for Ireland's Free State guerilla forces in the battle around the General Post Office in Dublin in spring 1916. The lung disease that eventually killed him arose from his imprisonment the year my mother was born. She rode in a pram with a secret compartment for hiding arms. That 1916 Easter uprising and the martyrdom or imprisonment of its surviving leaders, was considered a turning point for Ireland. By 1922, the uprising was successful; all but six out of the thirty-two counties in the small country were free of British rule after more than seven hundred years of occupation.

My father's family is from the North, which remains under British rule. It was an activist family. My grandmother had threatened British soldiers with an axe when my adolescent father had his teeth shot out accompanying his younger siblings to school. Two of his brothers were exiled to the South in the 1950s as "undesirable aliens," presumably for activities against the state. My father was Republican in that he saw Ireland as a country that should be self-governed. He was also socialist, despising what he saw as the class allegiances of the Catholic Church and foreseeing the promised wealth underlying the Free State South's abandonment of the North. He trained in combat in the Irish Army of the South and earned a degree in geography from the British university in Belfast. He was thus qualified to work in a British colony in Africa on what was then called the Gold Coast.⁷

His sudden death of cerebral hemorrhage the year after the family returned to Ireland and I was fifteen, left me free to pursue my own politi-

cal development. By the late 1960s, I was in Belfast, studying psychology, active in the civil rights movement and vehemently anti-violence. When the British Army came into the city, initially to protect the Catholics in working-class areas of the city from the rioting Protestant majority, the country erupted with house fires, bombings of civilians and shooting. Armed terrorist and paramilitary organisations emerged on both sides. My Protestant husband and I left for Canada and another place to raise our children.

Thirty years later here I sat at lunch in the Empire Club with my daughter, who has a mother from a Republican armed family and a father from a Unionist armed family. We listened as the Secretary, one woman amongst many suited men, spoke in praise of increased army and police presence as promoting peaceful resolution. We stood with the others as they played the British national anthem, "God Save the Queen." I did so feeling no resentment, more the sense that this queen, this woman, needed blessings.

The roots of terrorism and freedom fighting in my own family as well as the conflicted feelings revived by September 11th's public trauma revealed by my art-making encouraged me to review what I knew of terror, trauma and transformation. I looked again at other lantern-makers' revelations of disruptive experiences and complex alliances. This time I looked at the trauma and violence literatures alongside the vivid images from the Holding Flames Exhibit of what wounds and what transforms us toward joy. It seemed from the lanterns that the same place could hold both.

Terror, Trauma and Transformation

Terror is intense fear, the embodied response to the threat of dissolution or death. The response is a complex integrated system of reactions that arouses the sympathetic nervous system at all levels of the brain, bringing about changes in arousal, attention, perception and emotion. It is essen-

tially an adaptive response, mobilizing us to freeze, fight or flee. Terrorism occurs when humans behave in ways that evoke terror in others. Terrorism is usually defined as a system of terror or government by intimidation⁸ though Arnold Mindell (1995) points out that it “is not just a political activity, but a frequent and unseen group interaction based upon the sense of being treated unjustly” (p. 78). In other words, it is dynamic and often reactive.

Both the powerful and the oppressed resort to terrorism, the first as a *reptilian*⁹ and ill-considered reaction to their own terror when they feel threatened, the later as a desperate and again ill considered means for change in unjust situations. In the increased exploration of the roots of terrorism after September 11th, alternative presses and writers, including Barbara Kingsolver (2002), pointed out that the American administration’s threats to Afghanistan and Iraq amounted to terrorism given their “shock and awe” tactic of overwhelming force used against those with few resources. Alternative media and cultural critics pointed out that such actions, along with American policies of military, economic and cultural dominance worldwide, are breeding grounds for future generations of terrorists unable to voice opposition by more collaborative means (Chomsky, 2001). A terrorist is one who attempts to further their views by a system of coercive intimidation. Like other forms of violence, terrorism indicates a failure in relationships in contexts where dominance and submission are maintained as normative (Lynn & O’Neill, 1995; O’Neill & O’Sullivan, 2002).¹⁰

Trauma means literally “wound.” In the case of the human psyche, these are wounds that rigidify, limit, distort, fragment and even betray our body-mind-spirit as creative participants in Earth community. Traumatic reactions occur in situations where action in response to terror is of no avail, when neither resistance nor escape appears possible and the body’s adaptive responses become overwhelmed and disorganised. In traumatic situations, all those integrated components of the embodied response-

arousal, attention, perception and emotion-tend to persist in altered and exaggerated state long after the specific danger is over. For example, survivors describe *hyperarousal* in apparently safe places. They can become overwhelmed by emotions if elements of a current situation trigger memories of their earlier traumatic experiences. Alternatively, as I did in the aftermath of the attack, they can numb all emotions when the emotions stirred are overwhelming. Survivors can become cut off from aspects of their consciousness that enlarge their perceptions of situations, focusing only on dynamics isomorphic with their past. I was caught in the plane of my dream for many months.

Traumatic reactions can be life long if survivors are unable to recognize and learn to uncouple their responses to what is triggering. Such reactions can vary from anxiety, panic attacks, repetitive action patterns and all types of depression to suicidal thoughts, body image distortions, reenactment of abuse on others and extreme fragmentation of the self into so-called “multiple personalities” or other forms of dissociation. Dissociation occurs when the trauma is severe, occurs over an extended period of time and has an embodied element such as murder, torture or sexual abuse. Witnessing such trauma can also be traumatic and there are strong indications that members of oppressed groups can carry the traumatic memories of their community even when they themselves have no direct experience of that trauma (Burstow, 2003).

Trauma, like terror, is dynamic, arising not from one event or aspect of a situation but from various interrelated contextual aspects. Trauma occurs in situations where there are power differences. It appears to be an issue not of power differences per se, but of power differences and relationships of dominance and submission maintained by violence and the threat of violence.¹¹ Using the broad definition of trauma offered here, it is clear *all* of us have likely been *exposed*¹² to traumatic situations. Research estimates lifetime exposure to situations capable of traumatizing as 90% (Yehuda, 1999). As Judith Herman (1992) and others affirm, *none* of us is

immune to trauma; at some point every human being's resilience in dealing with ongoing inescapable violence is capable of being overwhelmed (Meichenbaum, 2000). Being unable to withstand continual violence is itself adaptive. It is unsustainable to human life to continue to function with inescapable violence. And while the natural world is violent, it is violence from other humans rather than threat from natural disasters that produces complex traumatic reactions.¹³

While all of us are exposed, not all of us suffer from what is currently called post-traumatic stress disorder. In North America, 61% of men and 51% of women report exposure to traumatic events, yet the prevalence of PTSD¹⁴ is 5% for men and 10% for women (Bowman, 1999). More men than women are exposed to traumatic situations yet twice as many women as men are labeled as traumatized and ten times as many women as men seek help to work through trauma (Lisak, 1995). The dramatic gender differences cannot be fully explained by resilience factors like supportive relationships, educational levels, multiple intelligences, sense of optimism and what psychologists call "internal locus of control" (Meichenbaum, 2000). In fact, the resilience factor most consistently mentioned, supportive relationships, perceived and received, is most often reported by women and rarely by men.

There is a link between those who have experienced severe trauma and those who in turn terrorise and violate others. Every inhabitant of death row, every perpetrator of torture, rape and severe child sexual abuse, has trauma in their past (Lisak, 1995; Miller, 1990) and over 90% of them are men (Lynn & O'Neill, 1995). While only a small percentage of the many men traumatized go on to extremes of violent re-enactment on others, 90% of those involved in war, in woman and child abuse and in the murder of both strangers and intimates are men. Why is that women and children, the most often and the most severely traumatized, constitute such a small percentage of those who in turn hurt others in extreme ways?

Understanding these findings calls for a broader cultural and social context and a power literacy that is rarely called upon even in the trauma literatures. It also requires a less dichotomized approach than that familiar from feminist literatures of male/female and perpetrator/victim (Brownmiller, 1975; Stanko, 1985). While a full discussion would take us away from our main focus on transformation from trauma, some key points are pertinent to what is unfolding here.

Men are perceived as having less chronic symptoms of trauma because the symptoms that they do have¹⁵ may be considered "normal" or "manly" in patriarchal societies where violence is entertainment or heroic and practiced by governments. Men can be rageful, focused solely on business success and not empathetic to the needs of others and be still considered culturally successful. Men, the vast numbers¹⁶ of men who suffer violence as children or young men, often deny or act out its effects (Kuypers, 1992). Male socialization is such that they are brought up with a "willingness to hurt," that is with the belief, means and culturally trained desensitization to view damage toward others as a necessary evil, to see it as justifiable force to protect themselves or those they care for (Kuypers, 1992). Men are not trained in empathy; it is not conducive to western measures of success (Jordan et al., 1991). Hence they do not easily feel compassion for what has happened to them or to others. "Bullets not tears" is William Pollack's (1998) description of this recursive cycle of violence tied to "armoured" cultural masculinity. Male socialization is such that men do not readily acknowledge what is done to them as violence. Once they are adult, many of them are able to move into culturally supported positions of dominance over others that help dilute their memories of helplessness. For a man being a victim is not permissible (Lew, 1990), neither is the expression of intense emotions like fear or terror (Garbarino, 1999). Cut off from their own early experiences, men tend to have less empathy for the sufferings of others and therefore fewer inhibitions around re enacting their trauma on others. Addictions to alcohol, drugs, sex, work, pornogra-

phy, gambling, power over others and consumerist society serve to self-medicate traumatized individuals and communities, maintaining their distance from experienced terror (Glendinning, 1995). The majority of men are thus distanced from the continuums¹⁷ of violent reality in much of their experience.

Women and children (including male children) are the vast majority of those physically and sexually abused, killed and dislocated by war and terrorized by intimates all around the world. They are also the majority of those breaking silence, protesting and researching trauma (Lynn & O'Neill, 1995; Miles, 1996). Women's and children's rage and sorrow at what is done to them in relationships, inexpressible when subordinated, is most frequently turned inward, into depression, anxiety and self loathing rather than turned outward into re-enactment (Jordan et al., 1991). When women are also members of marginalized or subordinated peoples, their trauma is further complicated by their fear for family members and of the powers that be locally and nationally. For example, women in Ontario's First Nations communities waited many years and countered strong internal opposition before breaking the silence and revealing that about the nine in ten Aboriginal women are (sexually and physically) abused ("Breaking Free" 1990). Their recommendations for culturally appropriate healing, including education on the effects of colonisation and a return to Indigenous healing circles and spiritual rituals, remain vital to the recovery of present First Nations communities (Longboat, 2004; Shilling 2002).

Women and children are also violent but with less cultural support and more community abhorrence. Their violence and anger tends to emerge in less overt though still damaging ways such as neglect, humiliation and contempt, disrupted learning, avoidance and dissociation. Women and children can become terrorists, sadistic murders and child soldiers but usually under systems where they themselves are terrorized and enthralled by brutal men. However, as bell hooks (1984) pointed out over twenty years ago, women in dominator cultures like our own, dislocated from

their interconnectedness with others, play their part in continuing to support the use of violence against targeted groups, in war and in patterns of child rearing which sanction and normalize violence.

"Banished knowledge" is how psychoanalyst Alice Miller (1990) terms the deep dynamic understandings about trauma that both men and women, for very different reasons, push out of consciousness. It *is* knowledge, knowledge of trauma that is embodied, painful and with which it is necessary to reconnect if we are to break traumatic cycles. Miller acknowledges the importance of an enlightened witness to reclaiming what we have lost but she is critical of medically modeled mental health systems. Like more contemporary writers (Burstow, 2003), she sees it as impossible to fully recover when our means of reconnection are *unenlightened*. Trauma is addressed primarily through psychiatric and psychoanalytic systems that tend to stigmatise and re-traumatise, as well as denying and pathologising racial and cultural differences (Burstow, 2003; Herman, 1992; Waldam, Herring & Young 1995). After two unsuccessful psychoanalyses, Miller herself was able to recover her banished childhood knowledge of her parents' involvement in child pornography through the making of art and her own processes of artful inquiry. Art and artful inquiry are potentially free of institutional and disciplinary embeddedness. Such processes are embodied, capable of holding the complexity and placed knowledge of our traumatic experiences as well as the processes of their transformations.

In terms of complexity, trauma, like transformation, arises out of the threatened dissolution of structures and produces dramatic change. However the distinction between the profound and multi-local changes wrought by trauma and by transformation is significant. Transformative experiences involve complete dissolution and re-organization of s/Self structures, radically shifting s/Self organization, consciousness and behaviours toward more inclusive, creative, integral and life affirming forms. In trauma, the changes are dramatic but not completely re-organising. In fact the response to threatened dissolution is splitting, fragmentation, dissociation

and isolation of certain parts of the s/Self, even while other parts may continue to evolve. Donald Kalshed (1996) talks of the most deeply banished and isolated parts of the traumatized self as arising from early experiences where our innate self care system tries to protect what is most creative and vulnerable. In severing us from that part and then continuing to protect it in ways modeled on the abuser, this self-care system paradoxically becomes a diabolical¹⁸ Protector/Prosecutor, unconsciously maintaining internal traumatic patterns. Characteristically in traumatic change, we are caught in rigid and repetitive responses and in maintenance of long-standing linear and hierarchical patterns of dominance and submission.¹⁹ These repetitive patterns occur whatever the situation.

Transformative change leads to creative responsiveness to the particulars of a given context or situation. Creativity is a defining characteristic of healthy living systems. Thus in personal and social transformations, we see the fluidity, multiple feedback loops and nested networks of connections that are found in healthy ecologies (Capra, 2002). There is freedom from set patterns of dominance and subordination and recovery of our innate capacities for *self-organisation*, *self-regulation* and *self-governance* whether as persons, communities or peoples.²⁰

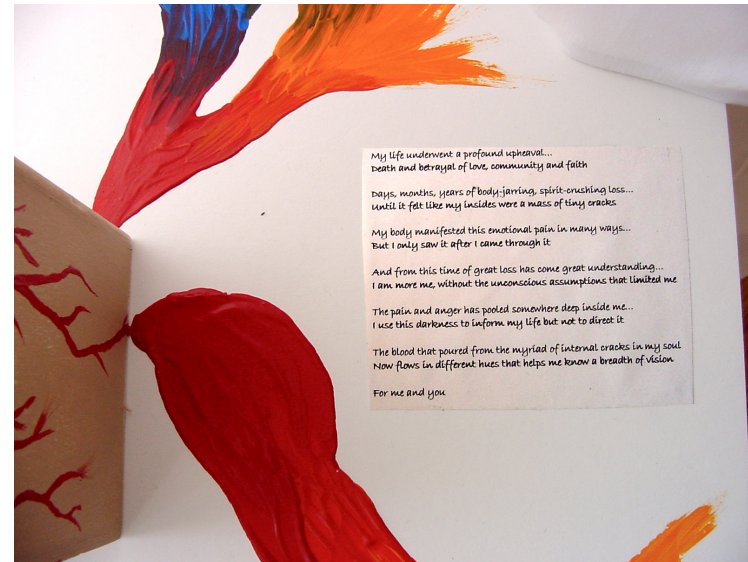
Thus the thesis being developed here and supported by this revisioning of the trauma literature and by the representations in the lanterns explored below, is that a necessary²¹ part of s/Self transformation is the revisiting and reclaiming of numbed or dissociated places of terror, making them visible and “eating the shadows” of our traumatic wounds (Brackenbury, 2002; Herman, 1992; Kalsched, 1996; Mindell, 1995).

From Holding Flames: Transforming from Trauma

*My life underwent a profound upheaval.
Death and betrayal of love, community and faith.
Days, months, years of body-jarring, spirit-crushing loss*

Until it felt my insides were a mass of tiny cracks.

*My body manifested this emotional pain in many ways
But I only saw that after I came through it
And from this time of great loss came great understanding
I am more me, without the unconscious assumptions that limited me. (Flags)*



Flags, detail

The lanterns in the Holding Flames Exhibit speak eloquently to the power of reclaiming trauma to make possible emancipatory, transformative change. There are direct signs of trauma like the bullet in my own lantern, or the bloody Gulf War tank on another. But the most dramatic evidence of transformation from trauma are in the many boxes/lanterns that are opened up, smashed, burnt, planted and built around, in the diverse creativity of lantern transformations. The same emancipatory movement is

contained in artists' statements describing lantern-makers' use of the limitations and cultural embeddedness of the boxes as a metaphor for their own freeing from constraints: "unboxing the female," the "sense of a womanly figure all wrapped up and the urge to open her out," "I was compelled to break the constraints of the box by stamping on it with my hiking boots!" The emancipatory push can be seen in words on the boxes

als, constraints, oppressions and the self-fragmenting, shaming, anxiety-provoking and boxed effects of trauma.

In many of the lanterns, there is the suggestion that women are caught as children, and that it is the child-woman that is struggling to become free of constraints and reach for fuller living.

Much is hidden on the inside, possibly unconscious, and barely vis-



Red Ribbon, back detail



Sanctuary, interior artefact



Luce, side detail

themselves, in "cutting the cord," "pressure relief" and "search for sanity."

There are indications that even holding situations that provide temporary safety, such as therapy, must be moved beyond: "the lantern formerly an incubator has now become a box we must eventually leave if change is to be complete," "I am not the box/body/mass at all, it is just a doorway, an entrance, an end trance." The statements and images together indicate that these women, like many of us, are transforming from betray-

ible. "Things are hidden but no less there. Things unseen are no less present. It is not always apparent what is growing or changing. Once illuminated it becomes obvious that what is there is meant to be" (Nest artist statement, Appendix A).

There are indications that trauma is intergenerational, happening and affecting individuals and families, communities and peoples (Four Directions). It appears that trauma, like s/Self transformation, is multi-local.

There are signs here of what Bonnie Burstow (2003) terms big “T” trauma, i.e. of specific events of violation, and of the insidious daily small “t” traumas like racism, misogyny and anti-Semitism that effect whole populations. There are the constraints of daily expectations around women’s body image and the repression of women’s sexuality, “slut!” appears often. “Bad girl,” “cunt” and “struggle for sexual identity” all suggest that women’s erotic power is under attack and reclaimed in their journeys of self-transformation.



Woman-in-Time, interior detail. “Not too old.”

Of particular interest given our discussion above about trauma isolating, dissociating or encapsulating vulnerable parts of the self even as others evolve, is this statement:

I saw myself in a steel box that while protecting me from vulnerability also stopped me from feeling or reaching out. My steel box was decorated with the illusion of openness, honesty and humour. I worked hard at it. So hard that I lost my way. It was in my dreams that I experienced my real self. (Doors and Windows artist statement, Appendix A)

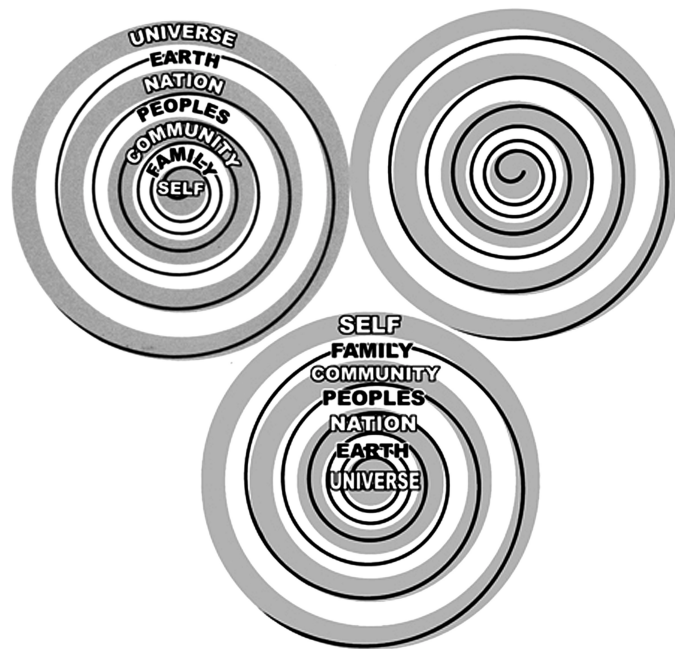


Doors and Windows, side detail.

Another lantern-maker wonders “how I was able to embody a willow, a pretzel and a bullet-proof-fire-door-equipped-with-a-very-scary-voice-alarm, all at the same time!” (Less-is-More, artist statement).

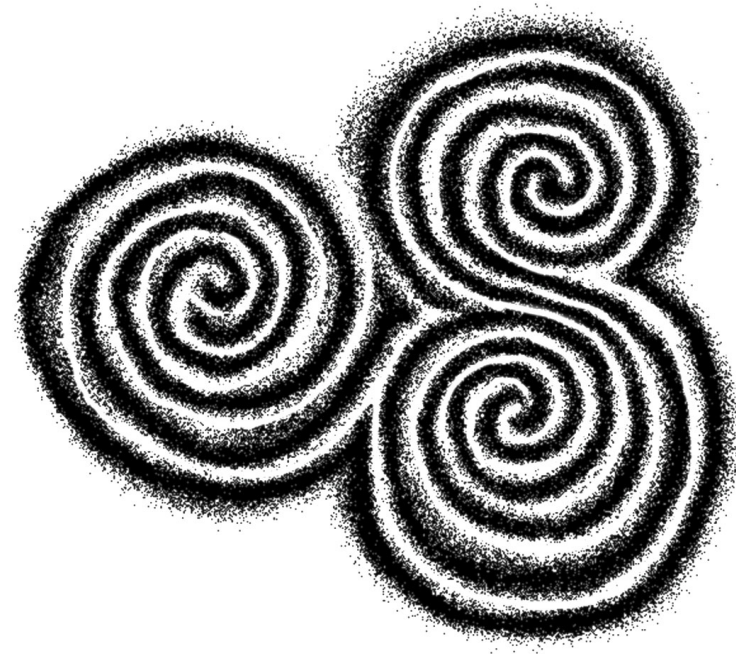
Trauma as Multi-local and Fragmenting Participatory Awareness

The concentric circles of s/Self together with the triple spiral are useful here in glimpsing how trauma is dynamic and, at the same time, multi-local and fragmenting of our sense of interconnectedness. At the personal level, trauma affects trust in all our relationships including that with our-



selves. It plays out in our workplace, social and cultural participation and in our families. In families, for example, the sexual abuse of a child affects not just that child but the abuser, the other siblings and other adults, particularly those not responding effectively to what is happening. In local communities, murder, rape and hate attacks based on spiritual beliefs or skin colour, affect everyone's sense of safety in differing ways. In terms

of peoples, the removal from their communities, the residential schooling and abuse of Aboriginal children in Canada affected those dislocated and violated, and distorted the experiences of their parents, siblings, teachers and elders within their local communities for several generations. Trauma at the level of place, like the environmental degradation of the Gulf war and devastation wrought by war in Iraq, affects generations of people locally with loss, poverty, famine and disease. It also affects the soldiers re-



turning to the relative prosperity of the United States and those of the defeated and their families. Trauma at the level of the planet, for example, global warming and species loss, brings disaster as vast as the tsunami devastating South Asia in 2004 and as local as the end of the cod fishing in Canada's East Coast Provinces.

Public traumas, like September 11th have resonance with private

trauma producing what Sharon Rosenberg (1996) calls the “remembering and forgetting” of intersecting memories. Drawing on the 1990 Montreal execution of 14 women engineer students by Marc Lepine, an unsuccessful young man brutalized and humiliated by his father, Rosenberg points out its familial, national and community causes/effects as well as its evocation of terror around her own incest experiences. Pertinent to this project on women’s knowledge, these intersecting memories help her connect her disrupted learning as a child unable to rely on her own embodied knowing with women’s struggles in academia where disembodied learning misogyny, racism, and epistemological violence are normative even if acts of dramatic violence are more newsworthy.

While trauma is thus multi-local in its effects, fragmenting and distorting our sense of the participatory, of being active co-creators of our life-world, it is important to remember that our lives are also multi-centric, shaping each other in ways that can radically shift direction once we are conscious of what is playing out in that moment.

Artful Inquiry and Trauma

As can be seen in the Holding Flames Exhibit, for women, children and other marginalised groups, art can express information or ideas that are taboo to those in power. Art and artful inquiry can be a way to express the inexpressible, such as childhood sexual abuse. Recent dissertations using arts-informed inquiry such as Brenda Brown’s “Eggs” piece subtly reveal, in its eggs lit and unlit, not only the shocking numbers of those sexually abused in childhood, one in three, but also the effect on development of such early shadowing trauma (Brown, 2001).

Early experiences, those before or beyond words are often revealed through art. In the lantern project, we can see many children peering through the lanterns, enticing the child in the observer. Small crayon-coloured pets, reversed and broken alphabet letters, teddy-bear beads found

strung across cribs are glimpsed as we look at the pieces. As one viewer writing in the guest book said: “I sense the lanterns are a space for the “sacred child.”

Words seldom convey what a child knows. Early childhood learning is sensory and multimodal. According to researchers like Daniel Stern (1985), children experience themselves from infancy not as merged but as distinctly themselves in their own sensory rhythms and intensities within the whole, as a self-always-in relation. With schooling into predominantly verbal/scientific/mathematical knowing, and cultural models of identity, that multimodal childhood knowing is split, fragmented, made less whole. In the case of early childhood trauma, what was inexpressible can be unearthed by art.

The processes of art-making and of artful inquiry can thus enrich and enliven therapy and academic research. The making of art and the process of artful inquiry can go under, even subvert, the binary and dichotomised nature of most western meaning-making structures. The arts are integrative, not only in honouring body-mind-spirit relationships, but also by being transdisciplinary in their creation, presentation and embodied content. Artful expression, whether visual or in poetry, dance or theatre, can allow for contradiction and paradox to be held together without collapsing into reductionism. When what is being expressed are aspects of the personal or collective self, arts can be more fully representative of the self’s complexities, conflicts and layers. The swirling currents and flows of the interpersonal lifeworld can then be seen by the art-maker herself. Bronwen Wallace (2000) speaks of this importance “of poetic spaces of non-linear life” in self development.

Public art installations, in addition to providing spaces for personal and collective healing, serve as community witness to what has happened and can elicit from observers, compassionate enlightened witnessing and inspiration for their own growth. From the guest book; “As I looked at each lantern I felt the tug of joy or the ache of loss. Each individual’s fire

producing pain but eliminating the “dross” from the pure gold. It is quite extraordinary to witness this on one wall.” And, from another: “Women’s wisdom, women’s wonder, the passion of passion, from grief and vulnerability to ecstasy, within the grief and within the joy. What an inspiration and what a sacred space each and every lantern has helped to create.”

Women’s Knowledge of Terror and Trauma



Goddess

Women have a particular historical and power location in terms of knowledge about terrorism, trauma and oppression.

There is mounting archaeological and historical research to support the fact that relationship patterns of dominance/subordination and associated human violence against each other and the earth are neither natural nor always present (Eisler, 1988, Gimbutas, 1974, O’Neill & O’Sullivan, 2002). Riane Eisler (1988) refers to the dynamic cycling movement between what she calls dominator and glyanic cultures (see comparative chart in Appendix C “Others’ Maps of s/Self”). In glyanic cultures prevalent four thousand years ago and still found amongst Indigenous peoples today, there are more equitable and reciprocal relationships between men and women, amongst peoples and with the natural world. Women are centrally involved in community decision-making and there is an awareness and ritual celebration of the sacredness of the Earth, of life in cycles of birth and death. With the rise of dominator cultures, came the reactive development of a defensive self and a profound shift from predominantly Earth-linked spirituality with multiple manifestations of spirit to one om-

nipotent and omniscient male god with all the powers of creation (Christ, 2003; Keller, 1995). Certain aspects of consciousness and knowledge became split, particularly after the “Enlightenment” and the growth of western supremacy (Bessis 2001; Tarnas, 1991). Attention to relationships, gentleness, nurturance, primary or sole responsibility for the care of children and the dying, all these human capacities became projected on women and then culturally devalued.

Women’s bodies and sexuality, continuing reminders of their relationship with the planet’s tides and the moon’s movements, of their being the holders of every new human life and having erotic power, were particularly controlled by dominator cultures and increasingly became areas of war and conflict. The Sheila-na-gig figure with her flashing genitals and intense gaze was placed not only above church doors but on the outside walls of battlements and fortified towers, presumably to terrify the approaching enemy. Again and again in the lanterns, it is women’s sexuality that struggles for free expression along with their reconnection to the wilds and the erotic, to being “so much more than a lady!”

For the most part, women and children’s expertise around trauma is earned in relationships of intimacy. This may be why they are the ones making the connections between violence at the interpersonal level and that at the level of communities, peoples and place. To quote Sandy



Moon, phases detail

Butler (1991), a pioneer in breaking the silence around incest and an activist in peace between Israelis and Palestinians, “it is the same consciousness that invades Grenada as invades the body of a four-year-old child” (pp. 119-120).

Women have the epistemological advantage of those in subordinated positions within a culture of always knowing more about those dominant than the dominants know about those subordinate or about themselves (Miller, 1986). bell hooks (1984) elucidated the particular knowledgeable perspective and access to supportive community of those on the margins. As in most situations of dominance and subordination, women are also the ones demanding change, exploring and sharing information around defining and stopping violence (Miles, 1996; Pierce, 1999). Women’s accumulated decades of knowledge, strategy and tactics around stopping violence, their relational attunement and their skills in countering oppression or containing trauma in situations where the violence continues, is thus crucial in transformation of human consciousness.

Women’s particular expertise on the effects of trauma and its recovery comes from the shared discussions of their diverse experiences and from their embodied knowledge of life, death and renewal. In pregnancy women hold new being as it grows through every evolutionary stage from tadpole-like, through tailed mammal to full human. In birth we experience the tearing apart of structures to enable the emergence of new life and the cutting of the cord that initiates independent development. As their children grow, women resonate with *their* joy in the world and with *their* pain. Monthly women feel the pain of loss and renewal. This embodied experience of trauma and transformation is played out again in menopause. It is not serendipity that even now, in every culture, there are sites and stories of the Earth Mother and that, as violence and trauma becomes more “normalized,” there is a return of the Great Goddess in imagery, art, spiritual practices and community ritual (Lane & Kumar, 2003; Milne, 1998; Muten, 1993, 2004).

What Initiates s/Self Transformations for Women

While crises, including public traumas, may initiate s/Self transformations what dynamically begins the process can be any or many things that our present s/Self structures can no longer assimilate.

Writers in transformative learning tend to focus as pertinent on those factors defining their own approach. Hence Mezirow (2000) and more cognitive theorists speak of disorienting dilemmas and crises of meaning-making structures; they keep the impetus for change individual. Edmund O’Sullivan (2002) and those working from a broader ecological consciousness, see the impetus for change as emerging from our critical and creatively reflective relationships within the social and cultural web. So openness to new places and peoples, as well as new ideas, elicit change. Daniel Schugurensky (2002) points out that while external evidence for change can be dramatic, like Rosa Parks’ refusal to sit at the back of the bus, the process of transformation can be developmental and cumulative, spiraling through, in Park’s case, years of exposure to critical ways of thinking, increasing awareness and involvement in social movements and then one specific educational experience with a diversity of others that provided “the strength to persevere in my work for freedom, not just for blacks, but for all oppressed people” (Horton cited in Schugurensky, 2002, p. 150).

The experiences of the lantern-makers tended to follow that spiraling path with many of them finding their change initiated by the birth and resonance with their children’s early childhood experiences and/or the return to school. The death of a parent or involvement with a lover were other relational factors that brought brewing transformations to a different level. “Through my mother’s death I was born again” (Wave).

Dorothy Ettling (2001), in writing on deep transformative learning in women, marks familiar external and internal factors that provide both impetus and obstacles to change. There are internal motivators like wanting to matter; feeling support and connection; experiencing one’s capa-

bilities or creativities. And external motivators like children's safety; having a relationship that matters; and going to school. Conflicts and obstacles, whether internal such as struggles between independence and connection; internalised oppression; difficulty in dealing with emotions, especially anger, or external, i.e. breaking from family and cultural patterns; lack of access to support services; double binds of mothering and employment, are the soil for women's transformations (Ettling, 2001).

In Conclusion

It is crucial and timely to extend our understandings about trauma's causes and effects to include their multi-local nature and to recognize that to break out of the defensive isolation elicited by current levels of violence requires us to reconnect with terror in trauma. Art was crucial in unearthing what was pre-conscious after September 11th's attacks, specifically complex aspects of my self tied to earlier trauma and rooted in communal and intergenerational terror. This moved me to review the connections between terror, trauma and transformation, encouraged by the Holding Flames Exhibit process of relating what is painful and what is joyous. Hence, terror can be understood as both threatening and adaptive. Trauma too becomes more complex when one recognizes its prevalence and multi-locality and its disruption and distortion of human creative responsiveness at all levels, including governance. Gender differences in responsiveness within dominator cultures suggest men are more traumatized and less willing to acknowledge and address the recursive effects of their reenactment and reliance on violence to elicit change. This is particularly problematic in patriarchal cultures where trauma produces rigidity and repetitiveness, severely limiting creativity. Parts of the s/Self, personal and communal are thus caught, encapsulated into patterns that maintain dichotomized understandings and hierarchical dominance and subordination.

"The whole universe is alive and changing, continually co-creating new possibilities of life" (Christ, 2003, p. 45). Women's embodied and creative knowledge of trauma and its recovery are enlightening and inspiring at levels beyond the personal. As Ettling found, personal empowerment lead to women's greater involvement and empowerment toward social action, that "experiencing transformative change fosters an awareness of the connectedness of all reality and engenders a sense of care and concern for others and thus, influences social change" (Ettling, 2001, p. 103). Artful engagement appears to be at body-mind-spirit levels, less colonised by dominant thinking, that enable this to happen.

¹The retreat appeared to be into my most terrified and highly defended, protective self.

²Burning plastic releases PCBs and other carcinogenic particles into the air we breathe.

³By "we" here I mean those of us living in North America.

⁴Jean is a woman in my own age group, recommended through a friend, active in education within the Labour movement, artful and Jungian trained, and deeply relational. My first therapist had left to teach meditation in California. I began work with Jean that fall. I still see her occasionally on a consultative basis and have her permission to use this pseudonym.

⁵As a sexually abused child whose abuser had suddenly disappeared after a row with my armed and highly protective father, I had believed/wished him dead and until my thirties, felt responsible for his disappearance.

⁶Experiences of colonization as a white-skinned person able to "pass" are, of course, different from those of African and Native peoples. There are also aspects that are similar and facilitate mutual empathy and advocacy.

⁷The name arose because of the lucrative slave trade from its ports that continued into the twentieth century. In 1953, it became Ghana, the first

African colony to gain independence.

⁸*Oxford Compact Dictionary* (1990).

⁹The earliest parts of the triune brain respond without necessarily involving the cortex (van der Kolk, McFarlane & Weisaeth, 1996).

¹⁰Such contexts of oppression and internalized oppression will be examined in more detail in the next section, Shadow Boxing.

¹¹O'Neill and O'Sullivan (2002) gives a brief review of power, including situations of temporary power difference like mentoring, therapy and parenting where the difference may be helpful.

¹²Exposure does not mean one will be traumatized. Resilience factors and context determine who will have post traumatic stress symptoms.

¹³Yehuda's (1998, 1999) research shows 4% of those exposed to natural disasters and 50% of concentration camp survivors appeared to have complex traumatic reactions.

¹⁴Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) refers to continuing reactions of re-experiencing, restriction of psychological responses and symptoms like sleep disturbance, memory and concentration problems some time after a traumatic event.

¹⁵"Men have a variety of ways of responding to their dilemmas and few of these give any hints of their underlying pain. The most widespread response is abusive behaviour toward women and children.. violence erupts in 50% of marriages in the United States. In times of social upheaval, economic depression and war, the practice of such violence assumes horrific dimensions" (Boulding, 2000, p.126)

¹⁶One in two girls and one in three boys under 14 here in Canada suffer some form of sexual abuse (Badgeley et al., 1984; Lynn & O'Neill 1995)

¹⁷Violence and its tolerance develop along a continuum from minor violations in child rearing practices through bullying and small disrespects or epistemological violence in intimate relationships and institutional systems such as education or religions to mediated acceptance of violence as entertainment and into more obvious breaches. Violence and issues of

consent around violence are most often defined by those in power (Lynn & O'Neill, 1995).

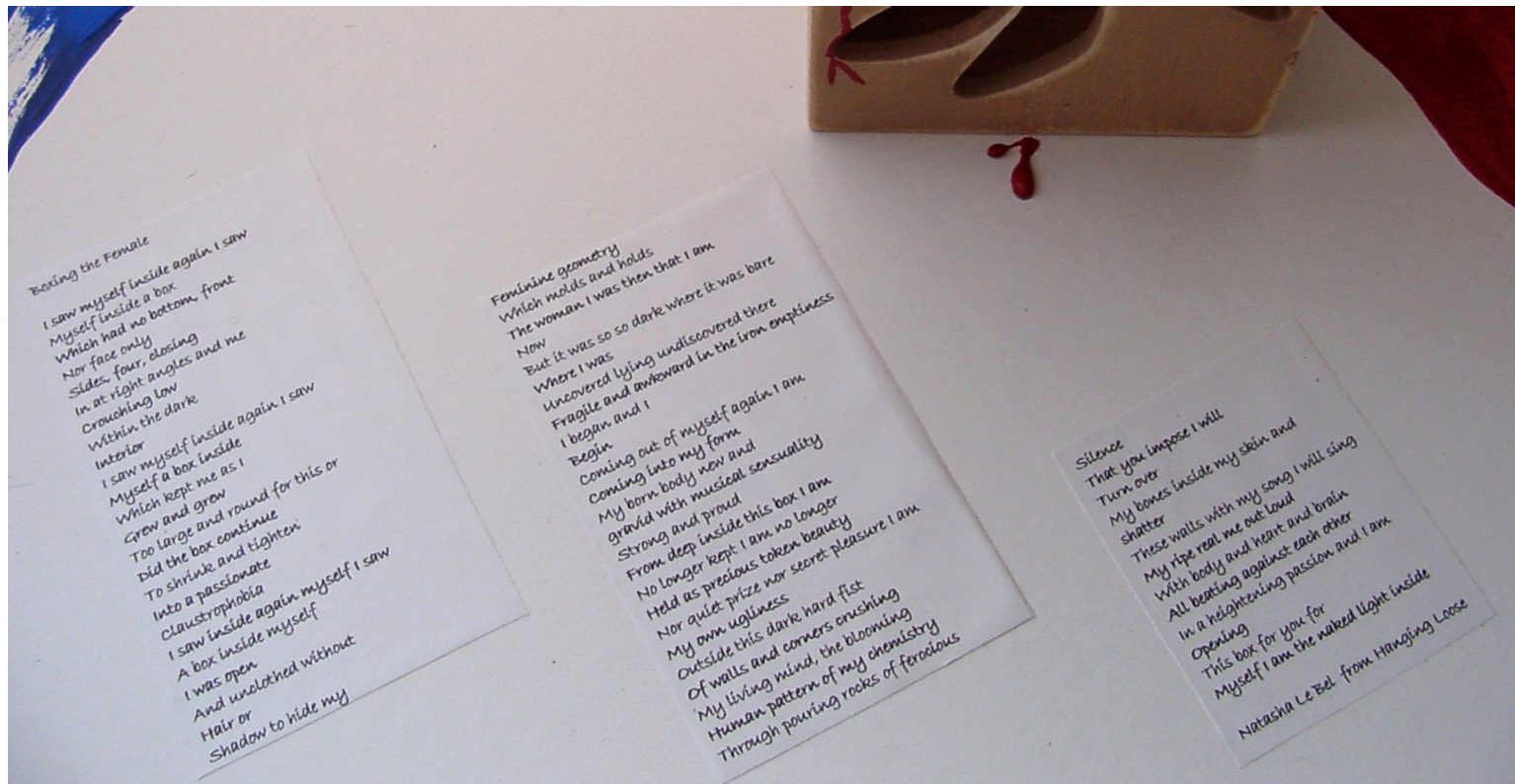
¹⁸"Diabolical" means thrown in two directions (*Oxford Compact English Dictionary*, 1990).

¹⁹Dominance-submission patterns play out amongst nations, peoples, different tribes and communities, in interpersonal relationships and in forms of internalized oppression.

²⁰It is thus clearly an oxymoron to speak of *self* government and *self* regulation at the point of a gun, literal or metaphorical.

²¹I am aware that there are both feminist trauma theorists and those in the psychiatric profession who would argue that such processes are not only unnecessary but potentially dangerous in the case of specific traumas (Burstow, 2003; Gundersen & Sabo, 1993). Given the emphasis here on participatory and co-constituting factors, I generally disagree following Kalshed's (1996) idea that Protector/Prosecutor parts of *s/Self* may be operating. I would suggest that in praxis the necessity of revisiting dissociated places of terror is always held in tension with the *self* direction of the healing process for particular persons or communities.

6. Shadow Boxing

*Flags, detail*

Exploring Walls and Windows

“I am my own wall” is what I had said to Ardra Cole as we prepared to organize the display space for the Holding Flames Exhibit and other art pieces in the Transformative Learning Conference. We both smiled at the meanings heard in that relational moment. They rang true. Recognising the paradox of being my own support and my own obstacle shifted my process. Displaying the lanterns and speaking publicly in November 2001

about my family’s history with armed violence and my recurrent nightmare of being caught in a plane hurtling toward the twin Towers, brought other changes. When I presented in front of the lanterns, I stopped teaching and explaining; I participated in what they elicited from those in the room. The exhibit claimed a space in the university for women’s knowledge of self-transformations, a space with minimal text and extraordinary presence. I no longer believed I had to keep reading more or gathering more “data” to justify what the lanterns were revealing.

Having a community of support in the arts-based inquiry class and the encouragement to explore my embodied understanding through another art project, gave me the opportunity to work through the connections between participating in the Holding Flames Exhibit, the walls and windows¹ that emerged after September 11th and earlier traumas. Inspired by James Muchmore's (2001) description of a small installation, an apparent reliquary that elicited multiple readings as the relationships between items in it changed, I made the Shadow Box. I began by affixing the two "Eye" pieces to the top of it to carry forward my purpose of freeing myself from the conflictual splits in my spirit and my vision of the larger Earth and Universe context. The Shadow Box became a way to see more clearly connections and divisions arising from oppression and internalized oppression in myself, in others and in the processes of the lantern-makers.

The Shadow Box

Found in a country antique barn, the compartmentalised box holds some of the shadow side of my own life reawakened in response to the cataclysmic effect of the September 11th attack. In their present positioning, attached by velcro to the top of the shadow box, the little “Eye” watercolours serve as a grounding perspective for what is in the shadows of the Victorian wooden 24-sectioned structure.

It holds a wide-eyed little girl, immobilized, mummified, silenced about her abuse by the arms of her protector. “See All, Say Nothing” is written below. Her wrapped body is separated from her head.² She looks stunned and alone, the square beside her empty. “Freedom/Doumo” is written underneath it. This is what I heard daily in both languages³ as the Ghanians around me chanted their independence. I felt their meaning but had no vision of that for myself. Their song underlines my trapped state.

Close by is a watercolour and photo collage of my father with an Irish



Shadow Box

flag and Ghanaian Kente cloth bisecting his head, all this glued against the background of a Union Jack. It was an eye-opener for me in assembling the Box, to begin to see my father as someone both colonised and reenacting his colonisation on others. It was an eye-opener to know in my body that the gun to my head, the feeling that I was about to be shot, was real. There are painted guns and armed men in groups on several levels of the Shadow Box-guns during university in Belfast, around me right now, and as a child. In Africa, I grew up with the exaggerated tales of Mau-Mau massacres against white families.⁴ Yet this threat was more distant and less frightening than the rifle in my parents' bedroom.

There is another photo of me, this time as a university graduate in the 1960s in Belfast, Northern Ireland. It is labeled "Open mouth, Caged mind," a less than compassionate critique of my British education begun with the nuns in boarding school and culminating in an honours psychology degree. A miniature copy of one school report from my twelfth year has me as the perfect little student, with one oddity, a first in the art exam though I did not take the subject. My creative expression was devalued in that proper British education and by my father who paid the school fees. I in turn held art apart from my knowing and intellectual self.

Beside the report from the convent is a photo of my elegant mother, younger brother and myself, a small white family almost invisible against the large white church and amongst the black throng leaving Sunday mass. I am twelve here also, visiting Ghana for the summer, a "Daddy's girl," desperately trying to be good enough, smart enough, holy enough, to get care and push memories underground. On the verge of adolescence, I wanted to be a nun. It offered freedom from sexuality, guaranteed physical care and guaranteed heaven. In tension with this illusion of freedom, are the Church's visible effects on the Ghanaian people around me. God the Creator, white and male, was effectively replacing the lively multi-spirited indigenous spirituality⁵ I found so attractive. This photo of the three of us stilled for my father's gaze shows the way his moods, pace and

wishes shaped the daily lives of family and workplace, god-like.

There was, for example, his insistence on intelligence testing that led him to enroll my brother and I in Mensa, an organisation for the top one per cent of intelligence scorers. This card was saved and annually renewed by an aunt until I was eighteen. I found it in her possessions after her death. It is here to remind me of my trained investment in conventional wisdom, my intellectual colonization by Britain, patriarchal loyalty and, to a lesser degree, the Catholic Church.⁶ With learned disregard for the aesthetic, embodied and creative, my intellectual expression to date has been deeply compromised, with more of my time spent in defense and justification of where I differed from British, Greek and Roman models than in creative development of my own indigenous perspective. Only now am I able to honour the synergy between wholistic expression of experiences in artful ways and deeper scholarly understandings.⁷ Only now can I see the connection between sharing multiple knowledges in epistemological equity, and reviving the ecology of the imagination and the eros of transformation.

The copy of my immigration reference from my employer in Belfast, along with the images of the thugs from the Protestant Shankill Road and the Catholic Falls Road, differing only in name, captures a further split in my psyche and my living. In my first counselling job, as a welfare officer in riot-torn Northern Ireland, I was "Eimear O'Neill" and Irish-identified in the Catholic areas, "Mrs. Bennison" and protected by my father-in-law's⁸ name on the Protestant Shankill. I saw snipers, body parts scattered by bomb blasts and another welfare officer blinded and legless after an attack on our local pub. I felt no fear, immune by dissociation.

The lone masked terrorist appears twice. I am still unsure who held the gun to my head as a child. The five-year-old me who drove herself to survive and succeed academically and the 12-year-old who pushed parts of her erotic creative self underground to do so, responded to the terrorist, like the pilot and the passenger in that plane, with silent compliance. The

terrorist in the present, placed beside the fragmented sketch of the World Trade Center, might be anyone including parts of me right now. Now I am no longer prepared to keep mum.

And then there is the ladder that shattered and jarred my pre-school bones. In the Shadow Box, it runs from one level to another like a child's game of "Snakes and Ladders." Only when I had finished placing it did I see that, like the game, it gives access both up and down, separating and joining sections. The pain in my body step by step rejoins me to my childhood self. It enables me to see the terror, trauma and silencing held at various levels of the Box, in childhood in Africa, young adulthood in Northern Ireland and potentially now, post September 11th. Seeing the connections changes my responses. My five-year-old talks. I listen. The ladder reminds me that support no longer needs to mean holding myself up.

Oppression, Internalised Oppression and Colonisation

From personal experiences held in the Shadow Box, oppression silenced and made unnameable my sexual abuse by the 15-year-old male responsible for my daily care. It can silence protest about any abuse by those deemed responsible for our daily care. It was not just the threats from my abuser and my confusing affection for him, nor just my father's readiness to resort to armed violence to protect those he loved, that mummified me. There was also my mother's depression and stance as a 1950s Catholic wife bowing to my father's authority. Without any words, I knew sexual things were unspeakable. Her oppression and apparent powerlessness also decreased the possibility my terror would be believed and addressed without lethal consequences. Apart from the family, I was, as a small white child spending time with the Ghanian women at the back of the compound, aware of *their* fear of losing their minimally paid jobs, *their* anger at the wealth and comfort of white people like my parents and *their* excitement at the talk of armed uprisings in other parts of Africa. Many

layers, levels and cultural factors, my own and others, muffled me.

"Oppression" has its root in "press," i.e., that used to mold or flatten things, to reduce them in mass, in the space they take up. "Something pressed is something caught between or among forces and barriers which so relate to each other that jointly they restrain, restrict or prevent the thing's motion or mobility. One of the most characteristic and ubiquitous features of the world as experienced by oppressed peoples is the double bind-situations in which options are reduced to a very few, all of which expose one to penalty, censure or deprivation" (Frye, 1983, p. 2). Marilyn Frye's (1983) classic text on "The Politics of Reality" makes it clear that the 'allowable' options open to the oppressed all benefit those in power over them. In other words, oppression limits our *self* determination, personally and communally.

Bonnie Burstow (1992) defines oppression as the systemic over-termination of one group by another, including the domination of their spiritual and material realities. This particular definition makes clear that oppression, while socially constructed, shapes the deepest levels of personal meaning. It is the moulded structuring of the multi-local s/Self in sustained oppression, the shaping by unavoidable and conflictual competing forces, that limits the core responses of the individual or the group oppressed, and is the precursor⁹ of trauma. Frye's image of a birdcage helps us visualize systemic, nested and connected limiting by oppression.

Consider the birdcage. If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere. Furthermore, even if, one day at a time, you myopically inspected each wire, you still could not see why a bird would have trouble going past the wires to get

anywhere. There is no physical property of any one wire, nothing that the closest scrutiny could discover, that would reveal how a bird could be inhibited or harmed by it except in the most accidental way. It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically, and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the birds do not go anywhere, and then you will see it in a moment. It will require no great subtlety of mental powers. It is perfectly obvious that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon. (Frye, 1983, pp. 4-5)

Focus on any one bar or axis of oppression, on any single “ism” of human social construction, tells us too little of what constrains, certainly not enough to liberate. What is needed is an integral analysis of oppression that critiques domination and enclosure of others’ resources on any grounds. The birdcage does provides us with a picture on how gender, race, sexual orientation, bodily abilities, class and all the factors by which we mark others as different and less, interact with one another. It enables us to see that in the whole picture of the social reality of oppression and domination, these dimensions are invisibly woven together in an intricate pattern.

As the Shadow box and the many child images in the lanterns reveal, the young are particularly sensitive to multiply layered oppressions in families, in education and mental health systems and in communal levels of violence. What is less visible in the birdcage analogy is the historic, intergenerational and internalized aspects of oppression that may keep the bird in the cage even when the cage door is opened.

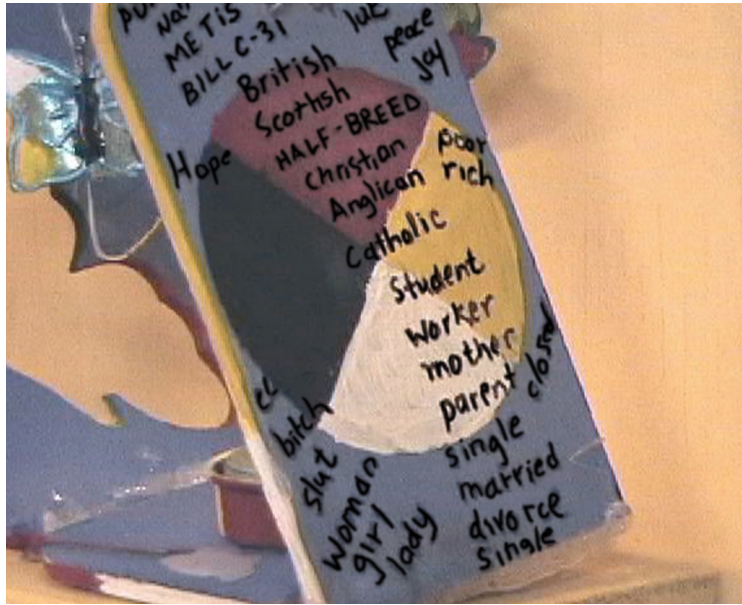
This painting by a anonymous survivor of woman abuse hangs above the inner door of my therapy office, reminding clients and myself that



Caged Woman

oppressive subjugation involves those subjugated in maintaining their own acquiescence, i.e., we learn to internalize enough of the dominant perspective to collaborate with its perpetuance. Thus my bright mother believed she was incapable of driving until after my father’s death; I learnt to value Cartesian rationality above my creative, embodied and intuitive connection with clients and those oppressed until I left graduate school. Placed to be seen when leaving sessions, this image is intended to raise issues of

experienced freedom for self-determination and self-expression in the therapy process as well as in clients' lives beyond the doorway.



Four Directions, back detail

The nested historic contexts and intergenerational aspects of oppression, dramatically visible in lanterns such as that marked with the Native Four Directions pin, are more subtly seen in the darkened Star of David on the inside of the Puzzle Wizard lantern whose artist's statement speaks of the bewilderment growing up in marriage between a Jewish father and Gentile mother within an anti-Semitic culture. The transformation of that oppression shines out in the luminous Star on the top of that lantern.

The spiraling dynamics of that transgenerational and transpersonal transformation are there in the story of the other lantern-maker who, after decades of hiding her Jewish identity post childhood terrorising by her Holocaust surviving parents, saw those stars in the exhibit. She was encouraged to begin reclaiming her own, her family's and her peoples' his-



Puzzle Wizard



Interior detail

tory, ending 40 years of intermittent agoraphobia and severe depression. Detail from her lantern below brings into focus the complex workings of internalized oppression.

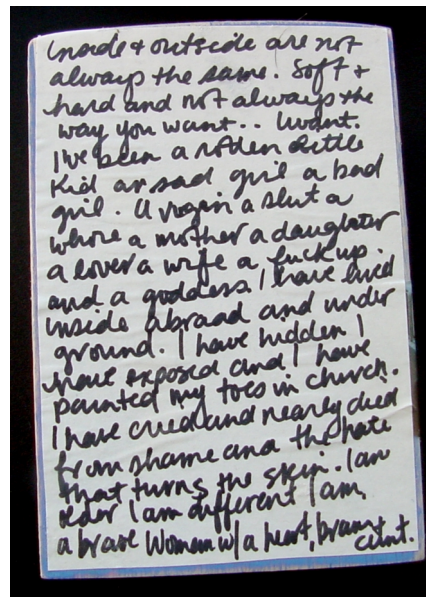


Guts, top detail

In miniscule writing, on the top edge of the lantern “Guts” are the words: “I have nothing to be ashamed of” and, more clearly, “NAM



Woman-in-Time, side detail



Nest, interior detail, side panels



MYOHO RENGE KYO.” While aware and decrying her internalized oppression, the form of her protest, this barely visible edge-placed sentence, suggests she may still be battling shame. The phrase from Buddhist practice on the adjacent edge roughly translates as “Be in tune with the natural flow of the Universe.” It indicates the yearning for a wider context and the support of spiritual practice for her transformative process.

Like other examples of self talk on the lanterns above, these messages suggest the countering of reality internalized from those dominant, whether parents or care-givers when a child, the culture’s double-binding dictates around sexuality and compulsory heterosexuality or institutional “isms” including that from the mental health system. Apart from images of internalized oppression related to childhood and early care issues, most recurrent comments address internalized oppression around women’s double bind of being either *too little* or *too much* sexually. “Too much or too little”

for parents, for men, culture or churches is not specified. This particular constraint on women’s self comes from multiple sources and is tied to long-standing historic ambivalence toward women as life-holding and sacred (Christ, 2003). What is also noticeable about such comments in the Shadow Box and in the exhibit is the reclaiming of the identity devalued by the oppressor. Hence my experiences as a woman both sexually abused and traumatized by armed violence and colonization, have been a source of activism, of knowledge of integral oppressions and of empathy with my diverse clients. For the lantern-maker above, sexual slurs become a declaration of worth.

Oppressors, through external threats of violence and internalized oppression, repress, deny, distort or subvert women’s power with others. They can limit women’s use of that power to being used only in the service of those dominant. What they cannot do is destroy such power. That

power is inextricably connected to women's¹⁰ engendered embodied participation in Earth community. To paraphrase bell hooks (1984) the one power even the most oppressed of peoples retains is the power not to accept the definitions their oppressors give to them.

To quote Paulo Freire (1970), the true focus of fostering transformative change "cannot be merely in fighting to leave or free ourselves from oppressive situations but in freeing ourselves from that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us and which knows mainly the oppressor's ways and the oppressor's images of relationship" (p. 23). When we are in sustained positions of subordination, we are being trained, constrained and shaped by the interwoven strands of oppressive structures to work within what benefits mainly those dominant. It blinds us to the limitations that continue even after overt oppression is no longer present.

I had left clinical psychology with its tendencies to reiterate medical models of labeling and pathologising change related to trauma and oppression, for the more transdisciplinary fields of transformative learning and arts-informed inquiry. Yet when I began writing for the dissertation on oppression and trauma after September 11th and the making of the Shadow Box, I became caught again. Between April and July 2002 I wrote 80 pages, 40 of which were rageful descriptions of the blind fundamentalism and arrogant violence of the George Bush administration and their similar counterparts and sometime collaborators in elite Islamic groups. Some of my writing raged about the effects on Earth's waters and rich diverse cultures of market globalisation and right wing corporate profit mongering in every area of human living. I was equally angry at the naivety and passiveness of the American peoples who seemed to support military action against Afghanistan and then Iraq, with no awareness of the oppressive foreign policies practiced in their name that were raising terrorist responses in all of the majority world outside of America. I even managed ten vituperative pages echoing Sophie Bessis' (2001) articula-

tion of the Enlightenment being less about development of human democracy and freedom from feudalism as about justifying the consequent colonisations and genocides of peoples in the South in the name of western supremacy.

Only when my therapist, Jean, said: "You have to get out of the plane," did I realize that all my energies were focused on those who, like my father, appeared to offer protection while increasing armed violence and forcibly silencing dissent. I was also focused contemptuously on those who were passive and not advocating for an end to violence, those like my mother¹¹ in childhood, or dismissive male friends or the silent passenger in the plane. Not until I felt all those interconnections when Jean had repeated her words several times, did I recognize my shadowboxing. I was caught in the fighting between that pilot, passenger, terrorist, and advocate self, that driving, helpless, terrorizing and *fierce*¹² self. Only when I was out of the plane that fall, could I become aware again of the blue skies and rolling seas and whole communities of others with whom a very different living is possible.

It is important to recognize that part of what we learn in oppressive situations is to obey orders, often without question. Or we learn to obey and override our questions, even our embodied outrage at violations. With internalized oppression, especially that compounded historically and intergenerationally through colonisation, genocide and deep spiritual dislocation, we learn not to speak about what has happened and about what is currently transpiring. We may even go along with harming others, blind to our role in their harm or too fearful to resist.

Stanley Milgram's (1974) classic psychological experiments on obedience to authority are a revealing testament to the willingness of even the gentlest of us to harm others at the behest of someone to whom we give greater authority. Milgram was interested in why so many became complicit with the killing of Jews (and homosexuals, gypsies and others marked non Aryan) during World War Two. He invited 40 ordinary residents of New

Haven, men and women, to become part of what was ostensibly a learning experiment. Each subject was told that they would be looking at the effects of mild shock on paired associate learning. They were, at the instruction of the experimenter present in the room with them, to move a lever that provided increasing levels of voltage in 15-volt increments up to 450 volts. What subjects did not know was that the “learner,” whom they could hear and see through glass strapped to a chair, was a professional actor. The learner made continuous errors and, as increasing voltage was applied by the “teacher,” the learner began to complain of discomfort, then asking to be let out, even banging the chair and screaming and eventually, at top voltage, falling silent.

Subjects did, some sooner and more vehemently than others, express discomfort at what they were being asked to do and some became tearful. But the shock was that, simply with the white-coated experimenter’s insistence, 65% continued to shock the learner up to the voltage limit despite what they saw and heard. This experiment, while clearly unethical, has been repeated over decades in many countries with remarkably consistent results (Blass, 2004).

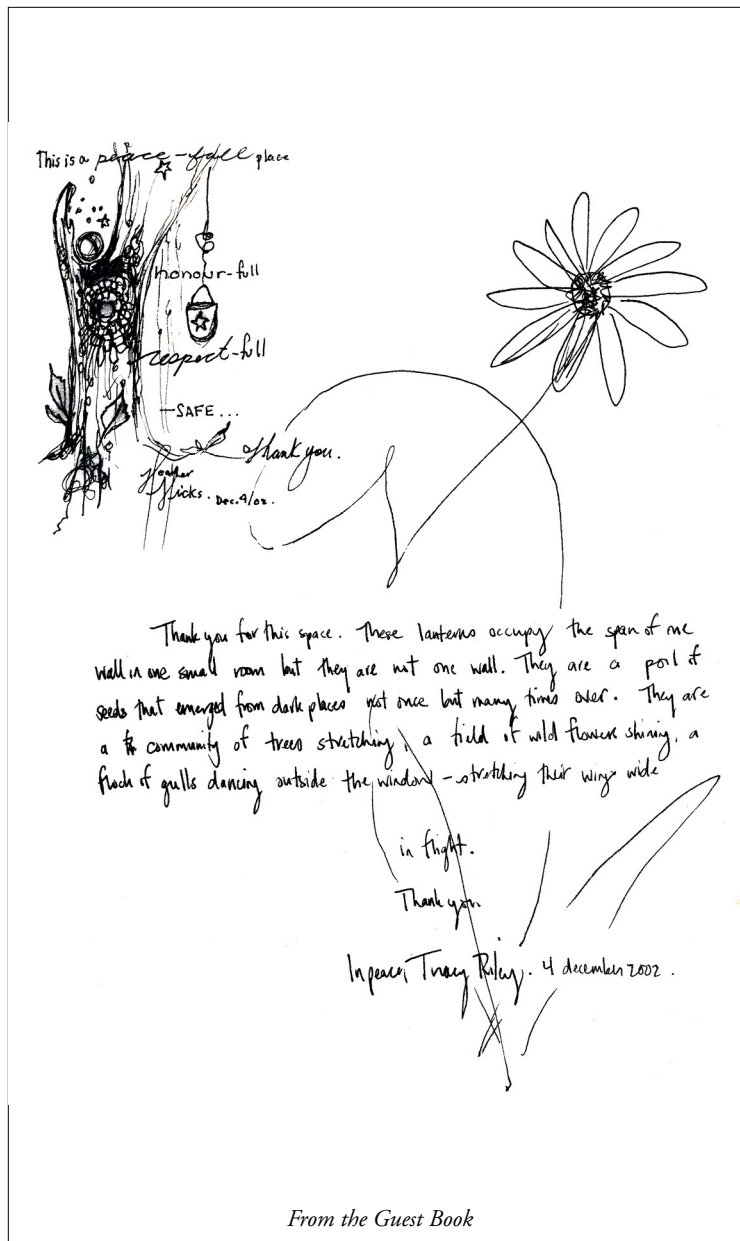
About the same percentage of men and women were compliant, though women were much more likely to express extreme discomfort. In variations on this experiment, several other factors became clear. The higher the status of the authority figure relative to the subject, the more likely there was to be compliance. Proximity of the authority figure to the subject also increased compliance. This is an extremely disturbing experiment given our understanding that some system of authority is a requirement of all community living. In the context of our current world authorities, it is terrifying.

What keeps some spark of hope is that the most powerful factor in reducing compliance, was the presence of another, even *one* other who disobeys the authority figure. It is important for each of us to acknowledge and get to know our own internalized terrorist, i.e. that part of each

of us so cause driven that we oppress others including those parts of ourselves disregarded or mistreated by others. Just as important is the public witnessing and advocacy of what is unjust.

Artful Inquiry and Freedom from Oppression

Artful inquiry in the Holding Flames Exhibit and personal pieces created since then reveal the continued oppression of women and children in patriarchal families, in disenfranchised communities and institutional structures like mental health and education. These are the oppressions both external and internalized which teach us “to live in a square world when you have a round core base.” While personal and time-bound, the Shadow Box raises multi-local and cross-cultural issues of women’s oppression that have contemporary relevance. The gains women have made through anti-oppression movements are presently in jeopardy from several complex and interrelated factors. First, the world is becoming more militarized which now means that while only a small proportion of men is active in combat, the psyche of everyone is pressed into service. Second, women are again caught in “homemaking” and “family values” rhetoric: economic globalisation is disempowering them through job exploitation and layoffs; there is another \$57 billion in pornography and much more in child and women sex trade that ultimately feeds corporate coffers (“The Battle,” 2005). Third, right wing religious fundamentalism around the world and particularly in American and Islamic societies, threatens women’s equality, education, rights to vote, and control over their own bodies and sexuality (United Nations cited in “The Battle,” 2005, pp. 8-10). Some political leaders in the South, like President Museveni of Uganda, tend to frame and reject women’s rights as a western import like Coca Cola and Levis (Wangoola, 2004). This is ironic given the most creative thinking and courageous activism on women’s rights in the last decades has come from women in the developing nations (Maathai, 2004; Shiva 1989, 1995) and



from the revival of indigenous knowledges in Canada, Africa, South America and New Zealand (Dei, Hall & Goldin-Rosenberg, 2000; Shilling, 2002; Wane, 2002; Wangoola, 2004).

Artful inquiry helps not only to reveal what is oppressive but also that which enables us to hold differing aspects of personal and global self in ways that foster empathy, complex relationship and epistemological equity. As the Holding Flames Exhibit confirms, through art we can put forward all parts of the self, including those disavowed by culture and family. Art encourages empathy for those various parts while at the same time challenging dissociation and fragmentation arising from personal and collective trauma and internalized oppression.

Because it is generally in forms subversive to dominant languages and revealing of unconscious and inchoate processes, artful inquiry can enable us to make deep interconnections, bridging earlier divisions and breaking silence about previously unnameable atrocities. In public forums such as community exhibits, conferences, performances and installations, art also bears public and compassionate witness to those atrocities, rippling out to transform others' personal and collective wounds. The page from the Guest Book of the Holding Flames Exhibit, exemplifies this creative seeding from dark places.

What Sabotages s/Self Transformations

It is the oppressive external structures and the continued depths of internalized oppression that slows or forecloses s/Self transformations. It is the "sad girl, bad girl" of children's mental health services, the "security deposit boxes" of historic and intergenerational traumas still possible and the stone walls "protecting" vulnerable parts of the personal self in coercive ways, that continue to shadow our movement into new creative alternatives. Paradoxically, seeing that shadowing enables us to become more aware of what still has to be opened up, unfold or come forward.



Sanctuary, in shadow

Women are, as we have seen, still caught struggling with powerful nested layers of cultural oppression especially if they are immigrants, poor and disrupted by the abuse toward them. Most of the available and freely accessible systems to support s/Self transformation to heal these disruptions through counseling, education or spiritual guidance, are pathologising, elitist, misogynist and racist (Burstow, 2003; Waldam, Herring & Young, 1995).

Even the theories of change behind these systems tend to be simplistic and so cognitive/rational that they avoid full engagement with issues at body-mind-spirit levels (Ballou & Brown, 2002). One example of this

oppression internalized into dominant theories of change is the labeling and treatment of those traumatized as “borderline personality disorders” (Gunderson & Sabo, 1993). Such naming ignores the abusive contexts in which behaviours associated with this diagnosis arise and, in the case of Canadian James Henderson (1983) whose article “Is Incest Harmful?” is still taught in medical schools, blatantly blame the victim. In fact the boundary violations that indicate any borderline disorders are more precisely, those of the perpetrator. In depth psychotherapy to explore those contexts is “contraindicated” in mainstream medicalised treatment protocols for women with such labels. The literatures talk about “opening a can of worms,” implying that those deemed “borderline” are too fragile and too difficult to manage if the issues underlying their dynamic patterns are spoken about (Ballou & Brown, 2002).¹³

Addictions also sabotage s/Self transformation numbing our capacities to feel and engage with what has happened to us in oppressive systems, keeping us in submission to substances or behaviour patterns that limit our self-regulation. There is a wine bottle top at the end of that tank, suggestion of eating disruptions in some of the body image comments in the exhibit and mediated stories of current historical contexts like September 11th’s events that make it more difficult to see connections between the various nested levels of oppression.

The Alchemy of Fire

The devastating disruption of personal and cultural security brought about by the September 11th terrorist attack and subsequent “war against terrorism,” reopened old wounds and led to a deeper integration of what I had begun recognising through artful inquiry in the Holding Flames Exhibit. It resonated with my earlier trauma experiences in times of armed conflict, as a child and as a young woman. The art pieces after September have been a way of capturing the liminal shiftings in my own sense of self

that tie the traumatic events together. They have helped me express and then see my own fears and needs around bringing down earlier structures of meaning, challenged in my therapy praxis and social activism but only now addressed in myself and in my scholarly work. Those ancient stone walls of my training and my self-armour are crumbling. My five-year-old is talking. I listen. She no longer has to terrorise nor does my 12-year-old self have to stay passive, asexual and academic only in conventional ways. The gory sights and armed threats of my early 20s are no longer tied to violent rage that focused much of my energies on the critical and political without fully honouring the larger creative Earth context. Getting out of the plane and seeing my own layered and interconnected colonisations more clearly, enabled me to become aware of that context and of those shadows that continue to effect transformation for myself and other lantern-makers.

The Shadow Box, like my lantern, is a reminder of the healing and taming power of the small. I learnt much through it about the recovery of embodied knowledge and embodied healing. I became more aware of my own need for public expression on behalf of those silenced. I have learnt from my own pieces and from the other lanterns that creativity survives longer than an ember deep in ground zero. Tapping into the creativity and knowledge of those surviving extreme circumstances, drawing on the wisdom of those consciously making new meaning out of oppression and trauma, makes us all much more than victims. Doing so artfully can help us monitor the white-coated authority in ourselves. Artful inquiry is one way to hold those complex tensions between what is joyous and what is painful. It helps us;

“Keep an eye on the bandaged place” (Rumi).

¹Walls are both supportive and obstructive. Windows put us in visual contact but distance our engagement.

²“I can’t hear

I can’t see

I’ve done the job too well

I never thought, I never thought

I could come to this.

I shake in my vacancy.”

(Eavan Boland, 1993, “The Woman as Mummy’s Head”)

³*Doumo* is freedom in Fanti, one of several local languages.

⁴My return to Africa in 2004 revealed that, in fact, during the rebellion to recover land only 32 white settlers and 100 British troops were killed while over 3,000 people from the Mau Mau hills in Kenya were massacred, 1,090 publicly hung. Over 70,000 Kikuyu were detained without trial, 40,000 in concentration camps (Andersen, 2005).

⁵Replacing the local multi-spirited and ancestor-honouring indigenous spirituality with one white male God was a form of domination central to colonization and dislocation of peoples from their land and history.

⁶I left the Catholic Church and indeed Christianity at 15, appalled at the violence being done in its name and the absence of place for women in its rituals and liturgy. Not until I found Earth-based spirituality in my forties, did I recover the sense of the Sacred and of home, yearned for since childhood.

⁷Bards were pre-Christian Irish historians, musicians and wisdom-keepers, poetic and scholarly.

⁸My father-in-law was a “B Special,” a member of an armed squad working with the police to intimidate Catholics and intern suspected IRA without trial.

⁹Trauma happens in situations where power differences are maintained by violence or threats of violence. Oppressive situations “justify” or are blind to the violations of those more vulnerable. In turn, oppressive situations engender terrorism (particularly by men) and trauma (particularly in those multiply vulnerable, like children or those disenfranchised by sex, pov-

erty, class, temporary ability or ethnicity).

¹⁰Men too participate in earth community but they are also the majority benefiting from current military, economic, cultural, governmental, institutional, and religious domination. Despite their greater power over others, few men have until recently taken on challenging forms of dominance and developing mutuality and partnership. Despite their greater privilege and responsibility, few men protest publicly about violence toward women and children.

¹¹My mother never remarried and has since her 70s become a fierce political activist for the vulnerable and aged in Northern Ireland.

¹²“Fierce” is what is wild and forceful in defense of life, not domesticated by hegemony but identified with emergent ever changing and ecological earth forms like fresh running waters and thriving forests.

¹³Yet as Christine Courtois (1988) pointed out “Many of the difficulties associated with treating borderlines might be alleviated by providing therapy which focuses on the trauma” (p. 161).

7. Sitting in the Fire

There is a brokenness
out of which comes the unbroken,
a shatteredness out
of which blooms the unshatterable

There is a sorrow
beyond all grief which leads to joy
and a fragility
out of whose depths emerges strength

There is a hollow space
too vast for words
through which we pass with each loss
out of whose darkness
we are sanctioned into being

There is a cry deeper than all sound
whose serrated edges cut the heart
as we break open
to the place inside which is unbreakable
and whole
while learning to sing

(Rashani, contemporary Sufi, in Ford-Grabowsky, 2002)

Sitting in the Fire and Eating the Shadow

It is in knowing one's own traumatic wounds, in taking in compassionately what is most painful and terrorising, that we transform and find new meaning-structures. Only then is the alchemical gold of the shadows found.

Without becoming more aware of what has constrained or distorted our spirit in moments of terror and violation at the hands of others, we risk remaining caught in systems of internal and external oppressions. When we deny the shadows, when the painful and wounding aspects of our lives are not visible, those shadow aspects keep us accommodated and even harmfully adapted to what holds us hostage emotionally, psychologically epistemologically and spiritually.

"Eating the shadow"¹ of our internalised oppressions and traumas, fully taking in what has happened and how we have responded, brings us to internal places of deep terror and of hidden shame. However these are places, moments of embodied experience in crisis, once confronted, that propel us toward emancipatory and transformative being. When we can be in those places with compassion rather than shame, we get a glimpse of the immensity of Earth's sun and starry universe that casts the shadow and the light.

Recognising what is terrorising or oppressive and how it may have disrupted us, is not just about becoming insightful or aware. Transformation is active and truly alternative. It is when we move creatively in relation to the ways we have been terrorised at the hands of others, that more transformative processes are ignited. Core to that movement is the paradoxical process of "Sitting in the Fire," that is of being able to stay long enough, deeply and compassionately enough, with what is conflictual and terrorizing to move through the spiraling journey of transformation.

Sticky Cobwebs, False Starts and Many Encirclings

My transformation has often felt like a process of going through thick cobwebs. You can almost see clearly but not quite. The webs are sticky and sometimes you don't spot them until they are stuck in your face and in your hair. Just when you think you've cleared them away you look up and there's another one in the corner. It is not enough

just to remove the webs, you have to look for the spiders too. You have to consider the good things the spider and the webs have done for you and decide when it is worth it to go after them both. (Cactus, artist statement, Appendix A)



Cactus

This lantern-maker shows the layers and complexities of s/Self transformative journeys in her installation and her words. Far from the set progressive stages one might assume even from progressive therapeutic texts on recovery from trauma and oppression (Herman, 1992), the journey is slower and beset with more obstacles than any of us wishes. It often involves spiraling down into the depths of painful experience again and again, each time rising up to a new level, each subsequent spiraling down less likely to devastate us. In fact, as the same lantern-maker suggests, the journey is continuous and life-long, “Each year my garden yields yet an-

other crop of stones. No matter how many I have cleared the year before, each spring as I turn the soil more rocks work their way to the surface. It is not possible or even desirable to try to remove them all.”

The spiraling nature of the transformative journey is present in the climbing frog moving around and down and up from that caged bright egg of creativity, in all those lanterns cycling around four developmental sides and in the intergenerational tides of sage² planted under moonlight.



*Transformation will continue
to transform itself;
reflections within reflections.
Sage grows beyond the womb
where blood becomes water,
and moonlight holds the
reflection of a flame.
Ashes of my mother
mixed in with the soil.
Through her life
my life began.
Through her death,
my life begins again.*

Wave

Carol Pierce (1999) and other writers with the New Dynamics group speak of continuums of transformation around various aspects of personal and communal s/Self such as our sense of ourselves as women, in terms of sexual orientation and as specific peoples; they see this journey as cycling backwards and forwards over the course of our lives and the lives of our communities (Pierce & Wagner, 1994). There may be moments and whole weeks where we are clear in our more authentic integral living and then moments, weeks and even months, when we are struggling through yet another assumption from our past, another old defense, another projection of our issues unto others that needs to be worked through. Personal and cultural histories are frequently built on denial or dissociation as well as the undeniable reality that there is much we do not know. I did not recall my childhood sexual abuse until my 30s. The histories of the United States as champion of democracy and England as champion of civilization are built on the denied shadow of genocide, exploitation and slavery of indigenous peoples around the planet.

Arnold Mindell (1995), whose book *Sitting in the Fire: Large Group Transformation Using Conflict and Diversity* inspired the naming of this section, points out that avoiding conflict and past history is part of an older multi-cultural paradigm; “deny the problems and they will go away. Avoid and punish those who rock the boat. However suppression leads to revolts and more unhappiness” (p. 12). This is true not only at the level of large

groups but also at multi-local levels of family, interpersonal relationships and within personal self structures. When we ignore, punish or disavow those parts of ourselves that “rock the boat,” our process through the fires of transformation is slowed.

The lantern below, initially closed and then piece by piece opening to



Boat, detail

Doors and Windows, three views

the vivacity of its interior, also has one door that leads, not to the interior, but to a wall of security or safety deposit boxes. In her statement, the artist writes of “many false starts.” Her open doors and windows hint too of the tears, the oceans of tears, involved in that stop and start process of opening up and closing doors. The Puzzle Wizard writes that:

Therapy as well as spirituality have helped me to make sense of the non-sensical in my life. They gave me time and space to allow the vortex of the past to be seen, remembered, shuffled about and, yes, at times honoured. This piece to me is about ingesting the pain and

moments of delight in the past and accepting splits so that they no longer become splits but an acceptance of life and therefore an enrichment of it. (Puzzle Wizard, artist statement, Appendix A)

The process of s/Self transformation is a spiritual journey. Renee Shilling (2002) reminds us of that when she shares what she learnt in reconnecting with her Anishnabe elders: “You have to remember that we are not human beings having a spiritual experience but spiritual beings having a human experience” (p. 152). Here is the participatory core of our shared being with other members of Earth community.



It is in seeing, remembering in context, re-ordering and respecting our histories, in taking them in as our particular placed personal and communal past, ingesting light and dark, that rebirth begins....

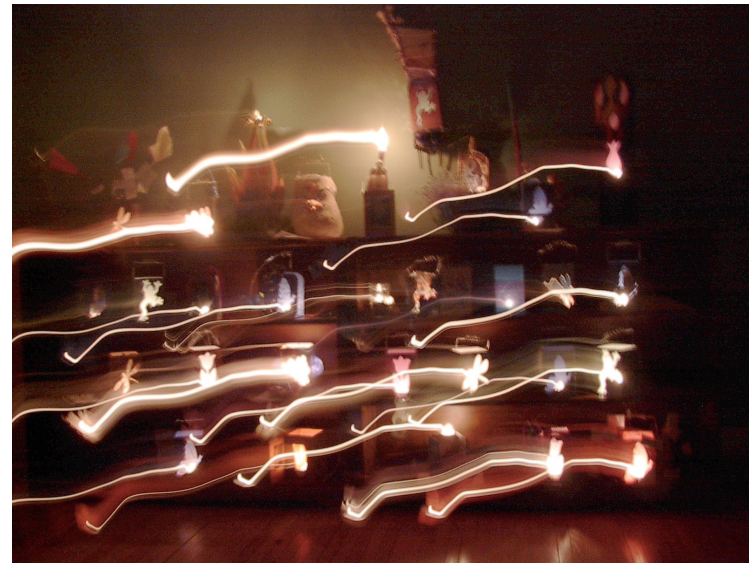
The sunrise on December 21st in the Valley of the Boyne River in Ireland, creeps slowly down the long stone passage of the Newgrange mound, just as it did five thousand years earlier. It touches and warms those huddled in the dark, illuminating the triple spiral carved into the passage walls. The flow of light marks the turning toward longer days and new sprung life.

My own passage through this doctoral research had involved many encirclings of the Holding Flames Exhibit, my written pages and artwork, and of history, cultural and personal. The process echoes the seeing, painful sensing, complex storying and manifesting in action, described by other lantern-makers. I have moved through eight years, two universities, three dissertations,³ and a shift from clinical psychology to transformative learning and the foregrounding of arts-informed inquiry. I know now that only creative modes could have freed the child in me from the shadow and enabled her to speak in play. The project is completely other than I first planned in the Brief Psychotherapy Center for Women and closer to the



Shadows Cast

vision of the dream in the Prologue. I stopped trying to fit the dissertation around my practice and made space to honour the process. I took time away from the care of others to write, moving from doing something for which I felt skilled and valued, into the chaos of writing. I slowly shifted from producing dense abstract and over-referenced text in which even I got lost, to beginning to trust the processes of art. This has, in turn, led me back to what shines in the shadow.



Light Trails

Artful Inquiry and Rebirth

Artful inquiry enables us to record epiphanies in many ways of embodied knowing. Because it is materially there with us over time and through various states of awareness, we can unpack its meaning, bit by bearable bit. We may produce an inspired image, installation, dream, or story and, over time, we can begin to understand more of what is held there in all its

complexity. This can free deep levels of understanding, as we spiral around and around experiences, both lit and in shadow. We can begin to stay with, and even re-story, what has gone awry in our own lives and in the lives of our peoples, in all its complexity and paradox.

We can then acknowledge our errors, our own inhumanities to ourselves and others. This is a task of fine differentiation when others have blamed, slandered and projected upon us. It is a necessary step. In eating up and recognizing our disrupted responses, we can more clearly hear the slurs and slanders of others. Feeling anger at their mistreatment of us, and then further seeing *their* oppressive contexts, frees and enlarges our options to act without denying our pain or being mired in rage. To use a Buddhist phrase, it helps us to “water gardens not garbage.”

In recognising through the Shadow Box, my father’s colonization and my mother’s oppression, I am moved toward decolonisation of my own and others’ spirit. My family’s neglect of my childhood injuries brings compassion for my vulnerability and survival methods that may continue into the present. I see now why I am driven to continue do things by myself especially when overwhelmed, not believing I can rely on other’s help. I suddenly see too how guns in a society, silence its most vulnerable members whether in the drug cultures of Toronto neighbourhoods or in conflict zones around the world.

To quote Lori Nielsen (2004): “Inquiry informed by the arts teaches me all over again what I didn’t know I didn’t know” (p. 46). I didn’t know my internal terrorist was five. I was not aware of the multiple splits in my self compounding that early shattering. Artful inquiry reveals subtle embodied knowledge and the gaps in our knowing. It helps raise new questions. Why does that internal terrorist head have the same proportions and orientation as my father’s? What does the repetitive motifs of waves indicate in the lanterns? How does the exhibit’s presence in the Adult Education Department shift the process of the gatherings in front of it?

Carvings and images fill many sites dedicated to death and rebirth.



Knowth Kerbstones, drawing and photograph

Indeed the sites themselves are often artful, womb-shaped like the mounds in the Boyne Valley (Lippard, 1983; Milne, 1998). The mounds of the Valley are surrounded by carved kerbstones, each of which holds images of the solar and lunar calendars, human life cycles, animal and river seasons, community plantings and the relationships amongst them. There are indications that the community moved around and through the site to bring about seasonal change in a truly participatory way. As the first place of farming on the island, knowing and passing on to future generations what was known, was essential for my megalithic ancestors. Art can enable us to manifest and see our connections in relation to others, to all our relations, as well as bearing witness to what is awry or unfair. It can hold stories of the process or rituals of death and rebirth.

In most contemporary indigenous cultures there are rituals, places and stories to foster the circuitous painful processes of death and re-birth for the body and the psyche. There are sacred fires, fasts and vision quests, sweat lodges, shaking tents, caves and sacrificial fire-pits like those on the banks of the Boyne River. Both ancient and contemporary indigenous cultures pass on in image and story shared aspects of pilgrimages of *s*/Self transformation all of which involve restoring balance and harmony multi-locally (Arrien, 1993).

What is numinous and storied can inspire change. In sitting in the fire and eating the shadow, we counter addictions and “quick-fixes” as means of addressing pain. We no longer leave those parts of ourselves depicted and seen as isolated, alone. We accompany them, all of them, in facing down shame. “It is the ultimate promise of transcendence, not through rising above the physical self but through being rooted in the earthy depths of darkness. It is the experience of the deep eroticism and wisdom of the dark goddess that anchors all aspects of the self, giving access to the lightness of life” (Milne, 1998, p. 63). In pilgrimages of *s*/Self transformation, we descend to those sub-sub basements of our lives that have no walls and where Earth speaks through us (see page 46).

***s*/Self Transformations as Pilgrimage**

“Pilgrimage” is a chosen journey toward spiritual change. The Celtic tradition of pilgrimage, still followed in rituals like that of Lough Derg in Northern Ireland,⁴ shares aspects of that journeying with many peoples and traditions. First,⁵ going on a pilgrimage is affirming the intention to engage in the healing process, leaving the space of daily life in search of a place/space to do so.⁶ The second aspect in Celtic tradition is finding the well or source and the third is encircling that source usually three times or in multiples of three. Circling is isomorphic with centering rather than the “repetition compulsion” of psychodynamic theories. We spiral round what is problematic to have it unfold differently than in the past.

Fourth, we encounter the guardian of the well. In Ireland this is often a loathsome damsel or monster to be embraced, i.e. some shadow aspects of the self to be accepted. Fifth, every visit to drink from the source involves sacrifice, the giving up something with no surety of return. Ego, belief in certainty, previously effective defenses, long standing structures of the self, comforting addictions, cultural status, are examples of what might be sacrificed even while we ritually offer tobacco or sage or monetary offerings. Sacrifice transfers energy from the giver to the wellspring of the larger totality.⁷ Six, in Ireland, the pilgrim traditionally drank from the well using a skullcup. The head in Celtic understanding is associated with vision, seeing, and it is the seat of the spirit not solely that of the mind. The skullcup is any vessel that holds the inexhaustible source in manageable doses. Vessels for vision could also be music, poetry, art and ritual.

The seventh and most central aspect of this journey toward transformation, is communion. It is in taking in, participating in the waters of life, in the *vis*, the flowing energy that is submerged through violence,⁸ that we come home to all parts of ourselves. In his chapter on integral development in transformative learning, Edmund O’Sullivan (1999) writes

on the dynamics of emergence; “As it is with differentiation and subjectivity, so with communion. This attains its highest expression in human consciousness, in the center of emotional attraction and in human aesthetic feeling. We cannot underestimate how important our sense of communion is for the deeper needs of our very existence” (p. 211). Time for integration is the eighth step and the ninth is the ritual of return, of bridging back what we have learnt into a community of support and accountability.

In summary the s/Self transformative journey requires us to find a place where we can go deeply into our most painful and disruptive experiences. We go deeply enough that, like Inanna,⁹ we are underground, underwater, under the grids and adornments of culture and into contexts of immensities. Within these contexts, there are no walls. This is the primary matrix, transpersonal, transspecies, and the archetypal depths where we are in touch with the teleological processes of the Earth and Universe speaking through us. In these depths, more than our own particular life, matters. It is by “cooking,” by sitting in the fire of those depths long enough, compassionately enough, suffering what is known with the help of a wise guide or elder or community, that we can journey up again to the surface. According to Edmund O’Sullivan (2005a), only after such a journey to the depths can we return with what he terms “emancipatory hope.” This is not blind optimism, bliss addiction or any dismissal of what is awry. Rather it is holding what is awry and being open to the bigger picture, aware of the Sacred and Immanent and our place within it.

What Fosters s/Self Transformations

Staying with the circuitous process of s/Self transformation over time fosters radical change. As this section has explored, what we are learning to sit with is “healing through the dark emotions” (Greenspan, 2003). Grief, fear and despair are our teachers. “In befriending our most dreaded emo-

tions, we discover the heart’s native intelligence. Each dark emotion has its own kind of wisdom, its own value and purpose, and its own alchemy. Each, in its own way, calls us to transformation. The alchemy of the dark emotions is a movement toward healing, harmony and metamorphosis that happens when we know how to open to them, honour their wisdom and power, and use their energies wisely” (Greenspan, 2003, p. 20). Miriam Greenspan supports the multi-local understanding of s/Self in this research, pointing out that these dark emotions have to be experienced as connected to what is happening not just in our psyches but also in the world. In a world of threat, environmental devastation and murderous greed, we either feel and learn with fear, grief and despair or we become anxious, depressed, psychically numb, attention-deficient, relationally-impaired, multiply addicted and spiritually wounded. “What conventional psychiatry and psychology do instead (*of staying with the dark emotions*) is reduce human suffering to a plethora of categories of pathology and document the steady escalation¹⁰ of these “mental disorders” in our time” (Greenspan, 2003, p. 19).

Psychotherapy and particularly the more relational forms of psychoanalysis do encourage us to make the connections between core relational patterns and their corresponding emotions in the personal self, in our surrounding relationships and in our relationship with the therapist. But few set this in the context of “all our relations,” few include cultural, historical and ecological contexts, let alone the multi-local layers and levels of relationship even with the therapist (Clarkson, 1995). As we have seen here, bringing all those interconnections to the surface, enables us to feel difficult emotions in a context broad and deep enough to foster hope.

When we are in the midst of those emotions, when we are trying to sit in the fire and eat the shadows of our lives, we need guidance. Given that it is human’s inhumanity to other humans that is most disruptive of our unfolding development, it is in human relationship that transformation from those disruptions occurs. The fragmentation, dissociation and

splitting that results has a protective aspect and as such, is not meant to be seen or experienced by those who have suffered abuse, trauma and oppression. Hence the need for someone else to maintain the larger picture that includes those splits and to hold hope and grounding when one is sitting in fear, grief and despair. A suitable guide, be they therapist, elder or spiritual leader has to have done sufficient amounts of their own work to ground others on the journey. In fact, guides and facilitators in s/Self transformation at both personal and communal levels can only support others to the degree they have done their own work and can be fully present with another (Ballou & Brown, 2002; Mindell, 1995).

Supportive and challenging community is crucial in effecting radical change at all levels. The most effective programmes addressing violence, oppression and social change generally are at the community level (Lynn & O'Neill, 1995). Transformative art in community can provide not only public witness but whole new ways to resolve issues. "The work of artists represents culture's way of imagining beyond its linear and predictable patterns. Artists can be a culture's scouts, forging paths into the future and their works, at their best, are prophetic" (Matanovic, 2002, p. 14).

Art and artful practices clearly encourage s/Self transformative journeys as the Holding Flames Exhibit demonstrates. Lisa Lipsett (2002), writing about spontaneous painting as a way of transforming human-Earth relationships says:

We need artful creation for all life's sake. We need to connect to the mystery associated with experiencing wild creative spontaneity. The creative life force in everyone speaks in images, in music, in dance, in dreams, in trance and in mystical experiences. When fully engaged with it, we have a sense of timelessness, of total absorption and preoccupation. We access the essence of self and nature, the creative living force that binds all beings together. (p. 217)

Artful practices can raise and to some extent contain, the dark emotions. They can also give us direct experience of wild creativity that fosters ecological consciousness and hence sustainable thoughts and actions.

Being in the wilds of the natural world, supports healing of body and spirit (Roszak, Gomer & Kanner, 1995). For many indigenous peoples, such connection is essential for personal and communal transformation. In the lanterns, again and again, we see the learning and support of the natural world emerging from the shadow. However, often the body and mind have to heal to some degree to be able to take in the wilderness without the need to dominate or control it.



Tree, in light and in shadow

Embodied care of self and embodied practices of awareness like yoga and mindfulness meditation connect us with the rhythms and flows of the natural world in which we are participant. They remind us of our matter and our mortality, encouraging us to face that most fundamental of fears and of s/Self transformations, death.

What fosters s/Self transformations are supports that are isomorphic with what has submerged, distorted, imprisoned and isolated parts of the

multi-local, participatory and indigenous s/Self. Thus we need long periods of immersion in the process.¹¹ Rather than numbing or staying in distortion, we can learn to tolerate chaos and uncertainty as a means of seeking clarity. We need a container, an emancipatory container, for the painful confusion of the process. And, most importantly, we need to be accompanied, to feel compassionate presence with all parts of our self..

Immersion in the participatory waters of transformative processes, recoups our sense of interconnectedness. We stay with the process long enough to recognize the interconnections between what happened to us intrapsychically, within our networks of relationship, to our peoples and in human-Earth relationship. Seeing and feeling these interconnections makes for profound change.

Becoming “comfortable with uncertainty” (Chodron, 2002), enables us not only to stay with the chaos and complexities of bringing down the dichotomous towers of previous meaning structures, it counters the confusion and distortions of conflict, oppression and internalised oppression.

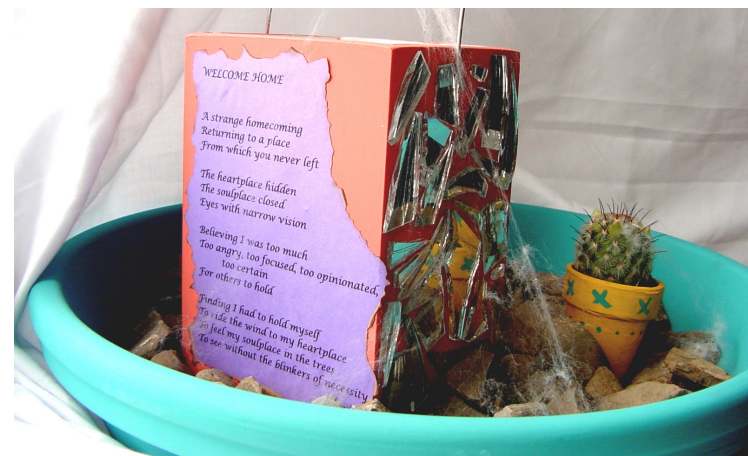
We can never know what will happen to us next. We can try to control the uncontrollable by looking for security and predictability, always hoping to be comfortable and safe. But the truth is that we can never avoid uncertainty. This not-knowing is part of the adventure. It’s also what makes us afraid. (Chodron, 2002, p. 5)

Learning to stay with our fear and be in uncertainty, enables previous defensive constructions and distortions to fall away.

When we are in chaos and uncertainty, we need a container, somewhere and some way to feel held and rooted while earlier structures come down as if by flood or earthquake.¹² We need enough structure to be contained but without being imprisoned like the bars of Frye’s (1983) birdcage. The structure needs to be supportive and comforting, like the

“squeeze” harness vets use when working with large animals in pain. It needs to be supportive but not confining or undermining of our capacities for being self-supporting, self-determining. Whether we are talking about sweat lodges, ancestral mounds, rituals of healing, therapy or education, containers of s/Self transformation need to have flexible changeable holding structures.¹³ Such structures have to be free enough to enable a diversity of peoples to creatively explore and bring forward what is most distinctive and life affirming about themselves.

Finally, most of the suffering in abusive, traumatic and oppressive situations arises from the very predisposition that allows such disruptions to occur, i.e., isolation. Disconnection from others, lack of sufficient attunement, empathy and connection, all shake our sense of participatory relationship. From my own experiences with clients, even in imminent death, what is most terrifying is not the letting go of this embodied life but doing so alone. Truly and fully accompanying all parts of s/Self, personal and communal, through the fires of transformation requires a wise and well-prepared guide to show us how. Then even those most shadowy and disavowed aspects of s/Self can be welcomed home.



Cactus, side detail

In Conclusion

Eating the shadows in our own lives releases the creative energy and vision to move toward more participatory consciousness and practices. It enables movement toward what is radically alternative rather than what may be locked in repetitive resistance. To paraphrase and expand Audre Lorde's words (1984) we learn not only to give up using the master's tools to dismantle the master's house but to reclaim our own tools and build our own houses. When we take in the depths of our own internalised oppressions, of the effects of terror and the traumas of human terrorism in our own and in the lives of our peoples', when we become more aware of the ways oppression and trauma shape our perspectives and behaviours right now, in this very moment, we have new options. Taking in our own internalised oppressions moves us closer to decolonising our selves, to becoming more indigenous to our place, more resonant with all that is creative, and to becoming truly self-governing within Earth community.

¹American poet Rosalind Brackenbury uses this phrase in an article post September 11th on the necessity of assimilating, as persons and as a country, those parts of self disavowed and projected onto others (2002, pp. 13-15).

²In many indigenous rituals including those from Turtle Island, Ireland and Africa, sage is the woman's herb, burnt in cleansing and blessing rituals.

³In attempting to squeeze all of what was emergent in the project, my advisor commented quite accurately that I had, at one stage, three dissertations in process and had left no room for the art.

⁴On p. 19, this ritual of fasting and circling stone beds in bare feet described by an elderly Irish patient was deemed "psychosis" by someone trained psychiatrically

⁵Sylvia Brinton Perera's (1981, 2001, 2002) writings and workshops have been invaluable in elucidating this process.

⁶In indigenous cultures such places are often in the wilds and they are usually contained spaces, like caves or sweat lodges, where one is aware of one's embodied self and the warm presence of others.

⁷This is said more than metaphorically. We are 80% water, totally dependant on and co-constituent with, Earth's hydraulic cycles.

⁸"Vis," the Latin word for life force is also the etymological root of violence.

⁹In *Descent of the Goddess: A Way of Initiation for Women*, Sylvia Brinton Perera (1981) follows the Sumerian goddess Inanna through giving up her signs of status into the depths of the Earth where she hangs as meat on a hook before rebirth through the tiny life of a fly.

¹⁰Twenty million people in the U.S. suffer from depression, 100 million worldwide. Each successive generation is more depressed than the one before. Forty-five million have severe anxiety disorders, 50 million have phobias. Children at ever younger ages are diagnosed with labels previously reserved for adults including alarming terms like "oppositional defiance disorder" and "attachment disorders" (Greenspan, 2003).

¹¹Such *intentional* immersion is very different than being triggered or caught in traumatic repetition for long periods of time. Like the dream that began this research, one can dive into or fall into those swirling depths.

¹²Buildings brought down by flood, earthquake or other cataclysms are common dream images during therapy.

¹³In therapy, the set times, predictable hourly sessions, rituals of opening and closing, and openness to collaborative ordering of this with clients, could be considered a container that does not impinge on self determination.

8. s/Self Transforming

Listen. This is the noise of myth. It makes the same sound as shadow. Can you hear it?" (Eavan Boland, "The Lost Land," 2001)

Burning Desire

The public showings of the Holding Flames Exhibit were over. I was no longer actively the curator. I had only one commitment that summer 2002, to participate in a retreat on Spirituality¹ and Education on the James Reserve outside Los Angeles. I was intrigued when asked to attend because of my presentation on the Holding Flames Exhibit at the Adult Education Research Association that same spring. For the first time I was in the wilds with a group of others committed to wholistic and Earth-based education. Here is a note from my journal on that experience.

August 3rd. This morning's 7.30 a.m. group meditation session brought me back to the dream² repeated last night. For the first time I not only watched the child that is me drop into that section in the whirling circle and go under the waves, I gently followed. There was no abrupt fall into that trauma space as so often before. I seemed to slip into those oceans of tears, those grief-filled waters under the surface of consciousness and even felt exhilaration swimming through those murky waters. This time I was less enthralled with the flight from the depths to the caves full of others in the cliffs above. I was more drawn to the swooping leaving of each place and more accepting of the weight of the self-reflecting being landing on my breast. I was able to greet her/him, that green creative vividness, with less terror and more equanimity. The bell to end meditation rang as my tears rose up and over.

That experience confirmed my commitment to more fully honouring the research process. For the first time since beginning to earn and support myself at the age of 15, I took three months away from work.

Suddenly, I was away from caring for others in therapy or at home, spending most of that time alone up north in the wilds near Algonquin Park with my dog and my writing. I returned to the city only for a course on Aboriginal epistemologies that fit well with the search to find my own roots of knowing. I was at the computer most mornings for about three hours returning after supper to edit the day's pages. Beginning to write on the ways in which transformative understandings changed psychotherapy praxis³ was less anxiety provoking than usual, though it felt at odds with my setting. Each day Tappy, my gentle Rottweiler, and I ran the high trails through the forest to the ridge where hawks swooped or followed the low road down by the wetlands where beaver, otter, bear and deer left tracks. We swam in the lake at dusk accompanied only by the loons and prowled under a night sky swathed in stars.

Surrounded by all this humming, milkweed-scented beauty, it was puzzling that my dreams and daytime musings were filled with images of flames and burning. I envisioned the Holding Flames Exhibit set alight on the lawn in front of the provincial legislation building at Queen's Park, drawing attention to what was happening locally and globally in the name of "security." I could feel the potential release of throwing the Shadow Box installation into a bonfire out in front of the old log cabin where I was working. I was haunted by an image of myself flame-painted inside an enormous burning lantern outline built of bamboo, boxed *and* wildly free. On a trip back to the city, I bought greasepaint to try out a flame-covered body. As the summer drew to a close I realized what I was feeling was not a need for burning but a burning desire for ritual, for some marking of the intense love of place, body and shifting joyous spirit I was experiencing.

In the Clearing

High on the hill behind the cabin is a clearing, a deer-trodden area of mother rock from ten miles down in the earth. Stones cleared by the early

white settlers in this region of Little Ireland are piled at one end. This is poor farmland with sparse sandy soil full of boulders. I had occasionally meditated⁴ in this vulval-shaped clearing, feeling rooted on that rock and held by the pines, birch and maples.

Seeing the first red maple leaves inspired the idea of creating an art form similar to those created by Andy Goldsworthy (2003, 2004), an ecological artist from Scotland who works collaboratively with stone, leaves, snow, running waters, roots and nature. His “installations” celebrate the ephemeral, the vivid form and colours of life, death and renewal. Eventually they disintegrate and return to the earth. While their changing beauty is captured in his photographs, he refers to the photograph as “only a record of the work. There are many qualities left out. In that sense the photographs work as a sort of invitation to feel how the work might have been (2003, p. 98). So it is with the photographs that emerged from my being in the clearing that fall 2002. They invite the observer into this event on my journey.

I like Goldworthy’s (2003) direct way with words and his sense of learning with place.

The atmosphere of any place produces a specific work. The space that a material occupies is made visible by the weather and the light. It’s that space I am trying to understand. I have to understand why that rock is there, the time it has spent there and the way it has affected that place... [Art-making] is a window into the processes that have gone on around that rock. (p. 98)

In the clearing there is a triangular rock with great presence. I began by wanting to create a leafy form in relation to it. I gathered red leaves over three days and kept them wet in the bathtub. Later the leaves would be arranged in graduated shades of red and orange close to the rock.

Inspired by the last 50 years or more of women’s art that reclaims

women’s bodies in all their breasted, fleshy glory. I decided to include my own embodied self within the art form that was taking shape (Muten, 1993). In doing so, I wanted to counter the anorexic and often pornographic womanly forms found in the North American culture and thus embraced the “much more than a lady” fearlessness of the sheila-na-gig figures from my homeland. Sheila-na-gigs represent the complex history of Irish womanhood from pre-colonial times to contemporary feminist countering of oppression (Mullin, 1991). Like Canada’s Nanabush trickster they share with images from other indigenous cultures, an earthy womanliness that is both knowing and irreverent.

The sheila’s are blatantly embodied and erotic in self-determining ways. I see them as mischievous rather than grotesque, distinctly non pornographic. They cross the boundaries of time and meaning, and make “cunt”⁵ an opening to the Divine, to the Mystery. I held them in mind as I moved around that clearing.

The flame-body image of my burning up within a lantern frame was still in my mind but as I applied the greasepaint, the initial yellow and blue markings on my arm seemed too contrived against the tone of my skin. When I started to rub them off, a wonderful spruce green emerged. Then I was covering myself, not for any effect to be seen by others, but in resonance with the trees around me and with all sorts of earthy spirits, with sheila-na-gigs, fairies, Nanabush tricksters and elves. There was a wild



Sheila-na-gigs

initiatory feeling that was more than local, that echoed Malidome Some's (1994) Green Goddess/tree figure faced in his ritual initiation into West Africa's Dagara tribe.

I painted an enlarged primate mouth around my lips after I had greened my body. I felt my childhood pet monkey's warmth and kiss, when its mouth sought mine in mutual comfort and I wanted to celebrate our connection.⁶ That small monkey had wrapped around me from ankle to neck, my Madonna,⁷ imprinted by need and early isolation from her own troop onto my lonely four-year-old being.

I saw myself reflected in the swampy pools at the base of the hill below the clearing. I remembered the green figure in my dream, bursting from the surface of the water. After immersion in those chaotic depths, there was a bursting forth of new energy, of *vis*, embodied and green life force. That energy had sprung the figure toward the communities in the caves just as my reawakened energy had brought me into the hearth-places of the lantern-makers, into the supportive communities of women met through the Transformative Learning Centre⁸ and now into the clearing and communities of trees and moss and rock.

I spent six hours in the forest and in the clearing, after calling a close friend⁹ to share in shaping the leaves and recording the day in photo-

graphs. Together in respectful silence we arranged the leaves around a public mound of starry spagnum moss, and then extended them to touch the triangular rock.

I moved around the clearing in relation to the stones, rock and trees, very much at peace. My dog sat in the shade in Buddha pose with her front paws crossed. My friend took two rolls of film. Only when I left the

films in for developing the next day did I feel any anxiety. Then I was beset by concerns of being too exposed, of yet again making "a holy show" of myself. I was also concerned about using the images in public¹⁰ display as a psychotherapist whose clients might see them. However, once the art pieces emerged, their archetypal nature made them more than personal and my concerns dissipated.

The three circles that emerged from that process

of being present to the place and photographing my interaction with nature in the clearing, were created at one sitting¹¹ the following weekend. I returned from the city with the prints and asked for input on them from several women artist friends and colleagues. A handy dinner plate decided the dimensions of the paper circles. As I sketched, painted and collaged, the pieces of one circle become central to another, in process creating a triple spiral.



Rock and Leaves



s/self Transforming



Dream

This narrative collage of watercolour and photographs holds the story of the dream that began this project eight years ago and of my own deep transformation over the course of the research. When I look at it, my eye is drawn first to the frantic little girl that is recognizably me. She is running down the path just behind the central figure's back. Then I see the swirling circle in the boat deck. One dark section is under water. I am aware of the water everywhere and the ways its meniscus membrane stretches right across the circle. It seems to mark what is above from what is below the surface.¹²

There is the body of water touching everything in the image and reminiscent of the lake I swim in daily. It reminds me also of the salty inlets of the North Atlantic on the Irish coast where I went to boarding school as well as the surging waters of my dream. Fast moving waters break at the bow of the vessel and fly off the skin of the green figure soaring from the depths of the water toward the caves. Gentler waters lap the small island on the right close to the cliff walls. The cliffs are full of caves like the wall of lanterns in the exhibit, each full of life. Waters creep onto the shores of the clearing on the left. Swirling waters fill the circle in the deck in the foreground. These seem separate from and connected with the body of water touching all.

Only after seeing the water do I return to the central figure. I meet her gaze, both terrified and terrifying. Then she is unavoidable, green, monkey-mouthed and holding my eye with hers. There is something primal and archetypal about her. I know it is also me only when I recognize the silver mussel shell she wears. I wear it always, a gift from my mother and a source of pun; "I get my muscle from my mother."

Once I see her, I see her in many other places, on the island, in the caves and in the clearing, tiny collaged figures are just visible in solitude, community and earthed connection.

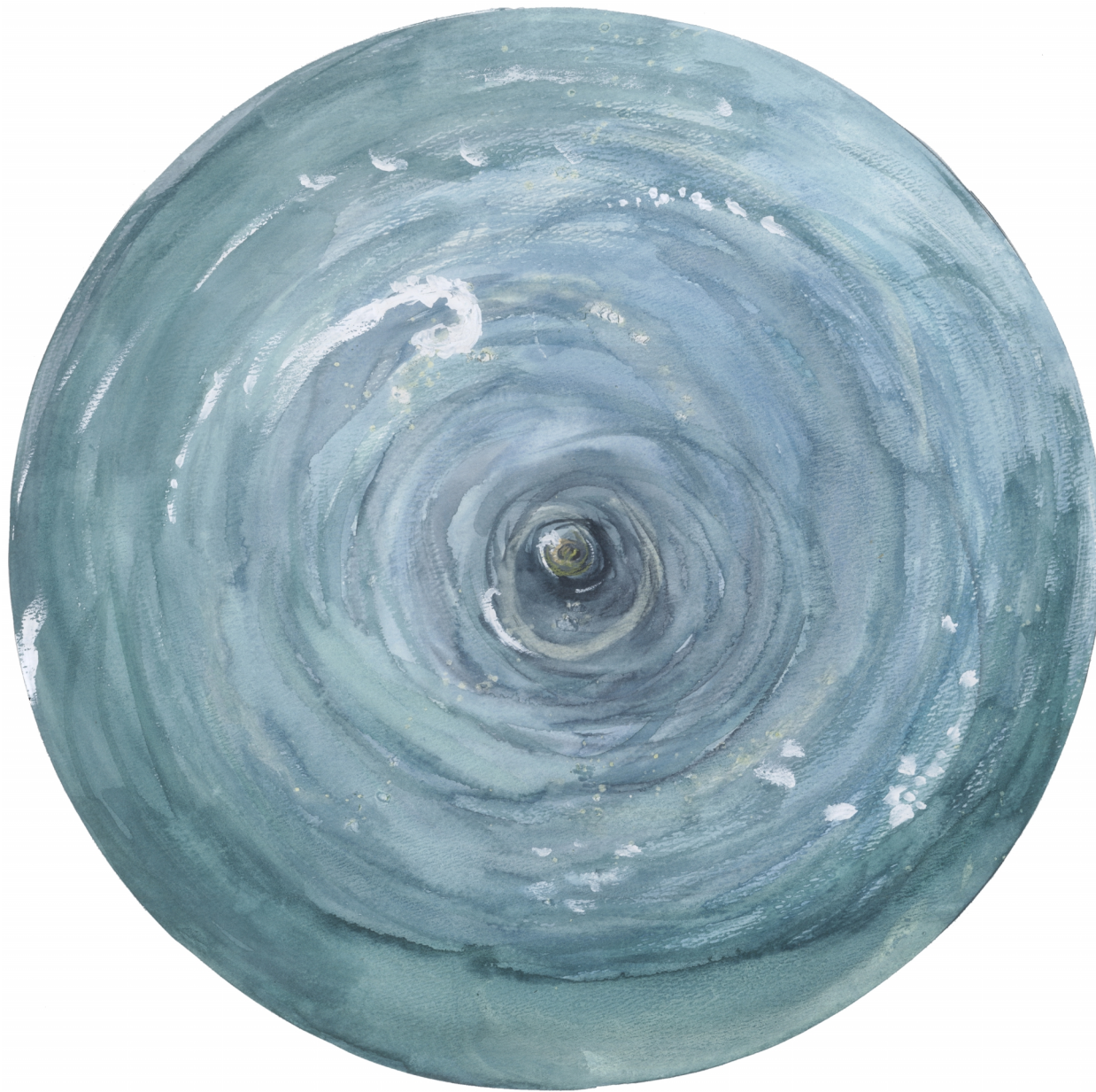
She helps me follow the participatory cycle of immersion, surfacing, moving into and out of communities, seeking isolation and a clearing place. That is when I know this is more than my journey. It seems to follow the pilgrim path of *s/Self* transformation described earlier. Other lantern-makers speak of immersion and surfacing in relation to the waters and waves of change. They too move toward new communities and take time away from daily responsibilities for others to be with themselves and to reconnect with what matters. This appears to be a story of collective as well as personal transformative journeys.

Even in the research process emerging from the Holding Flames Exhibit, there has been a continual cycle of immersion, surfacing, engagement with others, self-reflection, and finding new understandings by leaving the care of others and being at home with myself in the wilds. This circle then holds the story of the dream, of *s/Self* transformations and of the Holding Flames research.

Chaos

These watercoloured swirling depths are full and chaotic. Paradoxically the same circle of waters is contained chaos in its location on the boat deck in the Dream circle. The image appears both cosmic and quantum. I am reminded of spiraling galaxies and the dynamics of particle, wave and condensate. The waters tunnel down and circle up at the same time, suggesting temporary form dissolving into chaos. Chaos is a necessary part of transformative and creative processes. Like the deliquescent moment in the cocoon, chaos holds everything that has broken down and all that may emerge.

This circle is isomorphic with my state after the first public showing of the Holding Flames exhibit and post September 11th's deep opening up of personal and historic layers of trauma. There was nowhere to stand. I felt churned around by forces larger than myself, forces that moved me



beyond the caught depths in myself toward new awareness intimately connected with the lives of others. I was at sea.

These chaotic waters tunnel under what appears solid above and provide birth passage toward the surface. At first glance the image raises fear in me, a sense of being engulfed, of being drawn toward and down like the push-pull experience of standing at the edge of high cliffs. Then I am aware of the energy in the movement. Renee Shilling (2002) speaks of the spirit of chaos that is deep within colonized indigenous communities today. She describes this as collective stress in constant motion out of which emerges change when the energy of that motion is redirected. When you view the image of chaos in this circle the movement is in either and both directions.

Only when I have lived with the piece for two years and worked through the understandings of terror, trauma and transformation discussed in Section Five, do I see what others see, that this circle is also a breast. Then I recognise that there is nurturance, feeding of the spirit, in that chaotic state. Only then do I know why this churning and feeding chaos was what I fell or dived into in my dream. I had moved toward those swirls of chaos in conflict, both yearning for change and fearing further disruption, teetering often on its edge. I had also fallen again and again into that hole, into that pit of chaos. After that retreat on the James Reserve and the reworking of my dream, it appeared that my child self and indeed all my selves, have now found a resting place on the edge of that whole where we can see its depths and the next places on the journey. Now I feel that I can slip into those chaotic creative waters with more trust in my re-emergence.

When we move toward s/Self transformation, we risk chaos in the dissolving of earlier structures and the emergence of whole new ways of being and seeing. We need grounding to weather that journey. Being in this lake, swimming these waters, honouring the clearing in artful ways, has grounded and nurtured me. This circle is swirling waters, change dy-

namics and the breast of chaos, all full.

The Clearing Circle

I have many other names for this weaving of photographs onto a circle of watercolour paper. “The circle of sheila-na-gigs,” “She who Changes,”¹³ “the medicine¹⁴ wheel,” “four directions circle,” “the fairy clearing” and “the indigenous wisdoms piece.” All hold some of the meanings emergent here. There is an archetypal sense to these four images, placed east, south, west and north around a central clearing empty of human form. All parts are joined together by red leaves and the circle form.

When I shared the original 48 photographs with close friends and colleagues, they sorted them into groups of three or four. Here is what Pearl Langer (2002), therapist, colleague and friend wrote after choosing three photographs as representative:

The archetypes that I see, in order of their impact, are the Old Woman/La Que Sabe/She Who Knows/Wild Woman. This first photo (North), with her hand at temple, is the oracle to whom one brings the question, the wise one, comfortable in her place on the rocks that are ageless and worn, “the bones of the Earth.” She is comfortable with her body, as natural as the surroundings and at one with nature. The second photo (West) brought up images of a readiness to receive and to meet challenges, a spirit of great strength and rootedness. Also the image evokes birthing of the earth (rock, squatting)—very primal. The third photo (South) is the playful feminine which balances the other psychic aspects.

These same aspects were recognised by ecological artist and educator Lisa Lipsett (2002), poet and women’s center co-ordinator Mary Ann



Clearing Circle

O'Connor (2002), and my partner, Edmund O'Sullivan, philosopher/theorist on transformative learning and ecological consciousness¹⁵ (1999, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). Each added to these the same fourth aspect, the childlike springing figure that became East. All four of these aspects/figures shared with others and forming the final collage, fit my sense of what had emerged in that clearing. I chose the current name for this circle on that basis. This was a place and time, a full circle of clearing. Connection with the natural world in that clearing became central to my personal transformation, producing a profound shift toward participatory Earth-based spirituality. In turn that personal transformation has cleared some of the chaos in my understanding.

The centre of this circle is the clearing, formed by creatures, volcanic eruptions and Canadian weather, all forces more than human. This place called forth the beginning child-like and visionary energies of the East, the playful healing energies of the young woman of the South, the warrior and birthing spirit of the West, and the wisdom of the contemplative Northern chrone.¹⁶ In many indigenous traditions, the East being where the sun rises, is the place for first insight and illumination. It is also the place of childhood. My earlier child self has been crucial to my transformation, in her sensitivity, artfulness and vision. South is the direction of sun, warmth, fertility and healing. My living in tropical countries, having children and being a therapist have shaped my consciousness as much as meditation and mindful practices have fostered healing in that consciousness.

The warrior West, the place of group mind, of knowledge and of birthing, has been, until recently, a place of ambivalence for me. This is the place/direction of community. For me it has also been a place of pain, of communities¹⁷ full of colonised knowing, of betrayal and of terrorist despair. In the Celtic tradition, the brown wind of invasion blows from the West. Pearl Langer (2002) had referred above to this figure as rooted and of great strength in its squatting stance. Maybe this is why this west-

ern figure is the one who gazes out from Dream, challenging me to see and recycle my pain, colonization and terror to birth new knowing.

North is the place of wisdom and the ancestors, close to death and rebirth. In First Nations wisdoms, North is associated with white peoples and with the airy mind, both innovative and ageless. She is beyond, beneath and above human splitting of meaning into black/white, good/bad, past/present. She is closer to the beginning and to the end of any type of knowing. She is also but one place on the continuing circle or wheel, always giving and preparing the way for new life. From the East, the circle begins again.

The four figures in the collage produce a form both echoing and challenging the Celtic cross which emerged from pre-Christian symbols of interconnected continuity like the four-directional wheel of the Celtic year (Freeman, 2001). The collage figures, like the sheila-na-gigs, are from a more primal source than any institutionalized religion. They are reminiscent of mythical, Indigenous or Pagan figures in their archetypal forms. Brent Stonefish (2001) writing on the use of the medicine wheel in healing from internalized oppression, points out that the most significant of internalized oppressions under colonization, is our spiritual dislocation from the land.

English colonizing doctrines, perhaps the most enduring for indigenous peoples, were employed first on the Irish and then exported to the Western hemisphere. English justifications for the dispossession of North America from indigenous peoples, derived from an Elizabethan Protestant doctrine declaring the English in covenant with God to bring "true" Christianity to "heathen"¹⁸ natives. (Morris qtd. in Stonefish, 2001, p. 10)

Being green and heathen and monkey-related in that clearing reminded me and healed me from the words and attitudes held in the quote

below. This was written by Crown historian Charles Kingsley's in response to the famine-induced destitution he witnessed in Victorian Ireland, the same famine and violence that had driven so many of my people to leave their land for this, their spiritual home for this Canadian land.

I am daunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are my fault. I believe there are not only many more of them than of old but they are happier, better and more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours. (qtd. in Cahill, 1995, p. 6)

Recovering a sense of the sacred in that green place brought renewed energy, joy in my aging Irish body and recognition of the mystical as immanent rather than transcendent. This is Heaven, here, now, on Earth.

Three in One Emergent

The three circles together have helped give a human face to the triple spiral in organizing this thesis. They are the Dream that is personal and more than personal and that fueled the Holding Flames Exhibit, the Chaos shared with other lantern-makers and the earthy intergenerational Circle of transformation, of birth, death and renewal. On a more abstract level, these circles embody the dynamics of subjectivity (Dream), community (Chaos) and differentiation (Clearing Circle) which Thomas Berry (1991) cites as universally shared. Together, in their tension and interrelationship, they hint at an emergent s/Self holding all these within its current temporary transformation.

From a Celtic indigenous perspective, the circles hold the journey of

the spirit though the realms on, beneath, and beyond the Earth, a journey that always involves the triad of soul, heart and mind (Mathews, 2000). From a human psychological perspective, they touch on the personal historic (Dream), archetypal (Clearing Circle) and collective (Chaos) processes of transformation. From a transformative learning perspective, these circles interweave the survive (Dream), critique (Clearing Circle) and creative (Chaos) aspects of personal and communal transformation (O'Sullivan, 1999). In terms of women's illumination of transformative processes, each and all of the circles tend to support the understandings illuminated by the Holding Flames Exhibit that s/Self transformation is multi-local, indigenous and participatory as well as continually emergent.

Three Circles as Personally Multi-local, Indigenous and Participatory

The three circles together integrate my personal, communal and Celtic people's knowledge of change. They share indigenous imagery from Africa, Ireland and Turtle Island, the various places that shape my living. Many aspects of my personal self gaze out from this installation; child self, traumatized self, sociable self, wild self, solitary self, spiritual, indigenous and scholarly self, to name a few.

I share Gregory Cajete's (1994, 2000) view that all knowledge is originally indigenous knowledge, that is, it comes from the Earth, from the matter, forms and processes of the planet in which we are participant. Cajete claims that all knowledge and education, even Western education, is based on an indigenous past that has now to be brought forward into the context of contemporary knowledges to provide vision for the collective journey forward. In Ghana the local people used to speak of the sankofa bird which looked back in order to move forward. Coming back to the indigenous knowledge of my peoples in the three-fold form of the Boyne Valley's triple spiral and in the earthy interrelationship of body, spirit and

mind in this installation, led to a profound shift in vision for my work and my way of living.

That shift is a turn toward participatory knowing and a participatory sense of spirituality that is not easily held in words. Jorge Ferrer (2002) in his “Revisioning Transpersonal Theory,” notes the problematic intentionality of Cartesian thought and language. He describes phenomena like that in the clearing, not as individual transpersonal experiences but rather as personal participation in multi-local participatory events. While not denying an intrasubjective dimension to such events, Ferrer sees them as stemming “from human participation in spheres of being and awareness that transcend the merely human” (p. 117) and as occurring “not only in the locus of the individual but also in a relationship, a community, a collective identity or a place” (p. 116). Participatory knowing is not passive mental representation of pre-given independent objects but rather embodied awareness of communion and co-creative participation. Participatory knowing is enactive. It embraces an enactive paradigm of cognition (Maturana and Varela, 1987) that calls forth a world co-created by the different elements involved in a participatory event. This is what gives it transformative and emancipatory power. Being differently in and with the world, calls forth a different world. Working and living with more participatory awareness, with recognition of the interconnectedness visible in the lanterns and felt more personally in that clearing, would transform more than myself.

Without the knowledge held in place, in rock and waters and leaves, these artful representations and that profound shift in my awareness would not have emerged. Naked in that clearing, I know myself to be an active participant in the wheel of life. Open to that place, to the smell of the pines, the hum of insects and the twittering of chickadees, touched by the soft breezes of the day, I am home, at peace. “Learning to know a community or landscape is a homemaking” (hooks, 1995, p. 73). I feel both fully alive and very close to death and the bones of my ancestors, aware of my

warm feet and my temporary state in comparison to the mother rock beneath me. In that moment, I know my ashes will eventually rest here and feed this place.

Circles, Hoops, and Wheels: The Artful and Indigenous Roots of s/Self Transformation

The circle, sacred hoop, medicine wheel or mandala is a learning form familiar to many places and cultures. First Nations peoples in North and South America, Maori, Masai, Australian Dream Peoples and many other groups including the early Celts, used the circle as a drawn form scratched in the earth or carved in stone, to hold and share community knowledge of human/earth relationship. The form, frequently divided into four quadrants, is used to teach wholeness and balance amongst and between differentiated parts and processes in the circle and cycle of life. The examples overleaf are from various sources and include a sample of my own recognitions about process after the *s/Self Transforming* installation was completed.

The circle form replaces the distance between self and other, and between life forms, with relationship that is both differentiated and interdependent. While the form has been used to pass on understandings and complex interrelationships from one generation to the next amongst indigenous peoples, it has also proved invaluable in contemporary education (Cajete, 1994; Fitznor, 1998, 2002; Graveline, 1998; O’Neill & Shilling, 2003). A brief exploration of the examples given may demonstrate the form’s relevance for education around *s/Self* transformative processes.

Cajete’s (1994) mandala holds the seven cycles of curriculum for educating for science, i.e. for teaching knowledge of Earth’s systems from an indigenous perspective. Artful knowing and artful inquiry are integrated into every area and the transformation of personal and communal self is considered central. It is indeed centering, “the starting place where all

[illegible]

things meet” (p. 166) in this educational process. Cajete sees any learning as taking place always in the context of a spiritual ecology that is a reflection of the whole which includes “a multiverse where knowledge can be received from animals, plants and other non-living and living entities” (p. 177). Teaching is a communicative art, learning is a creative act and happens not just through text and talk but through unconscious imagery like dreams and visions, through all our senses and through mentoring or apprenticeship with those who have done their own work. Cajete knows “civilizations are not enduring human systems, communities are” (p.164). His mandala of curriculum is also one that fosters healthy communities.

This understanding is moved into action in Jean Frye Graveline’s (1998) “circle as pedagogy.” She follows the cycle of learning from *first voicing* what we remember and see, while recognizing the value, roots and limits of our particular knowing, to *speaking within circles of others* honestly, while listening respectfully and critically and without ever losing connection with our centered self, i.e. always asking whose will and whose culture guides your life and work? She moves us into *learning with elders*¹⁹ *creatively* through stories told within and about the community of “all our relations,” with attention to how we express that participatory awareness and toward *acting for change*. Acting for change implies doing more than just saying, and doing so in ways respectful of the wisdom handed down intergenerationally because not to act is to comply with the status quo of colonization of the spirit. Visioning and early taught values of honesty, caring, sharing and respect are central to her version of transformative learning for personal and communal s/Self change.

My circle, based on an Internet image of a Celtic knot isomorphic with the photo collage, is more artful than wordy. It simply indicates the interconnected Earth context and the boundaries, tangles and interconnectedness of memory, learning, knowledge and wisdom. In journeys of s/Self transformation memory comes before learning and learning before knowledge. We have to go beyond all these while rooted in them

before we reach wisdom. And, as in every sacred turning, the wisdom of the body and of those who came before us, comes before first memories, woven into our DNA and our morphic resonance with place (Sheldrake, 1988).

The circle, hoop or wheel is a continuous cycle based on indigenous sense of space as spherical rather than linear and of time as cyclical rather than sequential. This understanding of all times as co-existent and all space as interpenetrating is closer to contemporary quantum physics and at odds with the static ladder-like assumptions informing dominant worldviews (Cajete 2002). In the circles of the s/Self Transforming installation, the stories and the processes are ongoing. The personal and research narrative continues, so too do the plunges into chaos. The child, adolescent, woman and crone continue to co-exist in this moment, and to move with the turn of the year and the ever spiraling cycle of transformative processes. This is s/Self Transforming, not s/Self Transformation, never ending.

Like other visual and artful forms echoing the forms and processes of the natural world, this ancient and still relevant form encourages wholeness. Eisner (1995) maintains that the artful is an essential part of our need to make sense of experience. He believes that visual forms offer an “all-at-oneness” that disclose what might be hard to grasp through language and numbers alone (p. 1). According to Eisner, work that is artistically crafted creates a type of paradox; it reveals the universal through detailed examination of the particular. In this installation, the wholeness and complexity of more than my personal journey is presented. The meaning-making, dissipative and indigenous and archetypal roots of many personal and communal journeys of s/Self transformation push up through these three circles.

Together such wheels, circles and hoops considered in relation to education and multilocal change, help me envision new directions for my own work in therapy and therapist education. Imagine cracking open the traumatized shells of traditional therapy theories and releasing the

transformative energy in their indigenous roots. Imagine learning transformative psychotherapy praxis within sharing circles of women from differing cultures, disciplines and worldviews whose very diversity more truly represents those seeking change. Imagine art, play and creativity in every stage of that learning. Imagine honouring our contexts and ecologies as a whole Earth community within a multiverse!

Learning and Sharing Circles

Circles are not just representations. They are also models for specific processes of human interaction. In indigenous traditions, there are more than four directions in any circle. There is also what is beneath, i.e. the earth, and what is above, i.e., the sky or cosmos out of which we humans very recently emerged. This larger ecological, spiritual and cosmological context of understanding informs not only visual representation of the form but also the non-hierarchical processes of human interaction within learning and sharing circles.

Learning and sharing circles ensure that everyone gets to listen and take a turn at talking. Participants hear each other and share information from their own experience/place without offering opinions, comment or judgements on what others have shared before them. At the same time, participants may be reminded to share information because others have made points that may evoke memories.

Such circles can be places for healing, teaching and support and for adding to community knowledge. Everything put forward is placed on equal footing. It has epistemological equity and so potentially adds to what is known together from diverse perspectives, that is, to communal consciousness. As I explore the circles in my own transforming, it becomes clearer that learning and sharing circles²⁰ generally may be a creative model for personal and communal healing and for egalitarian education.

Toward Conclusion: Myth and Shadow Crackle

Being in solitude in the wilds of the natural world for an extended period of time, giving up the care-giving/therapy by which I had defined myself since childhood and beginning to personally honour the research process in a more wholistic and embodied way, called out a radical shift in my sense of self and in all my relations. It was a turning toward more personal spiritual and participatory awareness.

Suddenly the immanent sense of the Great Mystery held in myth and image crackled with what I knew from plunging into the shadowy chaotic waters of the past, mine and other lantern-makers. Three images arose.

The three interrelated circles of watercolour and photography that emerged from being naked and green in the forest clearing revealed more of the multi-local process of *s/Self* transforming. Deep immersion, returning again and again to the chaotic depths of trauma with compassion for all parts of the self, surfacing with new energy and involvement in community and being able to be in ongoing self reflection, all seemed to be core aspects of that transformative process, both personal and communal.

Being able to stay in chaos and uncertainty, to recognize and remain conscious and compassionate in dark caves and depths of turmoil enabled those places to become places of healing. The artful exploration of my conscious and unconscious experiences made visible the significance of reconnecting with personal indigenous and ancestral roots, and of having a larger historical, ecological and spiritual context for journeys of *s/Self* transformation.

For the first time I had a sense of spiritual as well as physical and intellectual integration. I knew my self as a spirit living a human life, rather than a human ambivalently living a spiritual life.

This poem is from my journal that November 2002:

Coming home
 Knowing
 Seven generations deep
 And wide
 What sustains
 And what fragments
 Our knowing.
 Knowing
 The whole
 Earth
 Is home.

By the end of that month the Holding Flames Exhibit too had found a home. What was extraordinary and fitting, was that, with the consensus of the lantern makers, the display has found a long-term place in the lounge area of the university's Adult Education and Counselling Psychology Department. It remains there to this date, accessible, safe and cared for by the diversity of those using the area.

Ending my time as curator of the lanterns and moving into more wholistic praxis in psychotherapy, brought profound changes. Over the course of the year from fall 2002 to fall 2003, I shifted into part-time practice, finished my course work and began to divest myself of the many responsibilities that kept me continually busy. I took on no new clients and finished with those ready to spread their wings. Instead I increased my consultation and supervision with therapists in community health centers. I sought more stillness. I spent every possible moment in the wilds. A meditation course in spring 2003 encouraged me to begin every day with meditation as a way of returning to sit compassionately with all parts of myself so that none were left alone for any period of time.

Only my writing remained relatively unchanged. I was still driven to write, still tending to use others' words rather than my own in articulating

ideas. This was one area where I knew I had yet to heal.

To heal means to make whole: we can only understand our world as a whole if we are part of it: as soon as we attempt to stand outside we divide and separate. In contrast making whole necessarily implies participation: one characteristic of a participative worldview is that the individual is restored to the circle of community and the human community to the context of the wider natural world. To make whole means to make holy: another characteristic of the participative worldview is that the meaning and mystery are restored to human experience so that the world is once again experienced as a sacred place. (Reason, 1994, p. 10).

Experiences and art making in the wilds had revealed the world as a sacred place. Now it seemed that I had to integrate my thesis work that had seeded the revelation into this participatory awareness. What was foreground and what was background in my living began to also shift, a move toward being rather than doing. Rumi (1995) again sings the way:

Fire is my child
 But I must be consumed
 And become fire
 (p. 63)

¹This was unusual for me. I avoided anything to do with spirituality since leaving the Catholic Church at 15.

²The dream was essentially the one that began this project.

³The implications for transformative psychotherapy praxis and the education of therapists, touched on briefly in this and the next section, will be the basis for another book.

⁴While I had participated in meditation with the Spirituality and Education group that August, this was a new practice for me. I found being on the land encouraged deep meditation.

⁵See page 94 for another lantern-maker's reclaiming of this word. "Cunt" derives from a goddess name similar in India, China, Ireland, Rome and Egypt and was an earlier title of respect for women (Walker, 1983).

⁶As humans, we share over 98% of the monkey's DNA. I was also celebrating my particular connection with the small green monkey who appears on my lantern.

⁷I think of the photograph on my lantern as an image of Madonna and Child, a version of the comforting elements in my early Catholic faith.

⁸Apart from the feminist research group, there was the larger group of artist/scholars at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, some of whom had made lanterns and with whom I met regularly.

⁹In my Gaelic mother-tongue Luciana Ricciutelli is an *anam cara*, a soul friend whom I trusted to see me and appreciate what I was doing. She is also Editor for Inanna Publications and Education Inc. and *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* and a writer on childhood trauma from her Italian perspective.

¹⁰Public display and community response beyond my dissertation committee seemed necessary to meet the requirements for public witnessing. Sections of this thesis will be published on the web.

¹¹They were later glassed on both sides and edge-wrapped in copper.

¹²Water, the source and essential element of human living, is associated with human consciousness. The membrane seems to differentiate and join what is conscious with what is subconscious.

¹³"She Who Changes" is the title of Carol Christ's (2003) book on re-imagining the Divine in the world. It is also a refrain from contemporary Goddess and Wicca rituals: "She changes everything she touches and everything she touches, changes." "She Who Changes" has a participatory

ring being both enactive in the world and autopoietic.

¹⁴"Medicine" in First Nations understanding is not that which heals the physical or even the spiritual body but that which makes us whole and in harmony with our environment

¹⁵Edmund O'Sullivan is also a blues drummer. It appears that creative expression as well as scholarly training encourages archetypal connections to be made.

¹⁶Indigenous peoples from many places use the circle, wheel and hoop of four or more directions as a heuristic for wholeness, balance, harmony and healing (Cajete, 1994; Gunn Allen, 1986). Angeles Arriens (1993) who is Basque and Celtic, gathered together four directional teachings from many traditions in her "four-fold way" of becoming indigenous to body and spirit, as teacher, visionary, warrior and healer.

¹⁷Communities in academia in Canada, in feminist organizations such as a short-term therapy center for women and in civil strife in Northern Ireland, had been places of learning and pain.

¹⁸"Heathen" refers to being of the heath or uncultivated land just as "pagan" refers to being people from the countryside (*Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 1986).

¹⁹Elders are those who have done their own healing work, who know the range and roots of local community knowledge and can convey that in vivid accessible ways to others on the path (Fitznor, 2002, class notes).

²⁰Experience of the depth and resonance of learning in a sharing circle in Aboriginal epistemologies with Laara Fitznor, enlarged earlier power equity group work with New Dynamics (www.newdynamics.com). What was new was the possibility of applying this to therapist education.

9. Epilogue

Circles of Transformation

I am wind on the sea
 I am wave of the ocean
 I am a hawk on a cliff
 I am a salmon in pools
 I am a lake in a plain
 I am fire in the head
 I am the strength of art¹

Being the Fire

The Holding Flames Exhibit became “a doorway, an entrance, an *end* trance” toward an understanding of women’s journeys of *s*/Self transformation as multi-local, indigenous and participatory. *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (1986) defines wisdom as accumulated philosophical learning. The lantern-makers’ honouring of the immanent, embodied, more-than-human, ecologically creative and multi-centric Earth as necessary context for their personal journeys is accumulated philosophical learning, that is wisdom not just knowledge. Being participant, curator and researcher with the lanterns, putting my own lantern out in a community of others, caring for the display, becoming aware of the life changes of lantern-makers and observers, and returning again and again in artful heuristic fashion to the “data,” sparked further transformation in myself.

The re-opening of my own earlier traumatic wounds, especially post September 11th’s public traumas, revealed a deeply encapsulated part of myself. This was a part still caught *by* and *in* terror. The artful inquiry of the Shadow Box installation made visible how my internal terrorist had compartmentalized parts of myself. It also enabled me to feel, for the first time, compassion as well as abhorrence for that protective, repetitive and

male-identified part. Making connections between trauma at personal, communal, cultural, species and planetary levels answered that Celtic knot of questions from the beginning of this project (p. 9). Attention and compassionate staying with traumatized parts in individual psychotherapy or personal self-transformative learning, effects community and social change. Being involved in community, social and spiritual change that is life-affirming, can move many individuals, families, workplaces, peoples and even the planet itself, toward healing.

There is a need to return in pilgrimage to places of terror in ways that are contained and accompanied. Given the nature of internalized oppression in cultures of dominance and submission, accompaniment on that journey is necessary. A loving and respectful guide has to have gone through sufficient healing of her own shadow aspects. Sitting in the fires of conflict and eating the shadows of our own part in human and planetary suffering is core to *s*/Self-transformation. The artful inquiry of the Shadow Box enabled me to reconnect with the mummified, silent and colonized parts of myself held captive. Originally protective of the most vulnerable creative and emancipatory parts of my self threatened with annihilation in childhood sexual abuse and colonized education, this part remains a terrorist. It maintains my “safety” by being insistent on my *not* telling, on my staying in my head rather than my body, on my hiding behind my intellect and British-schooled academic skills rather than risking the more embodied, creative and revelatory depths of artful inquiry. It raises fear, chaos and the threat of being unlovable when I put forward my own perspective. It does so still but less frequently and with less effect. Now we can talk. Now other embodied, intuitive and spiritual ways of knowing have had expression.

Seeing and being compassionate to the terrorist, passenger, pilot and observer aspects of my own self from childhood to now, made clearer the indications of trauma and oppression in the Holding Flames Exhibit. In turn the creative tensions between what was caught and what was opened

up in the lanterns helped me review literatures on trauma and oppression with what Lisa Lipsett (2002) calls “knew eyes.” It is those traumatised and denying trauma’s rigidifying effects at personal, communal and people levels who tend to continue cycles of violence, environmental degradation and war. They avoid the painful dissolutions and dark emotions of s/Self-transformation, often numbing themselves in addictions and re-enactments. It is those traumatized who tend to dominate or submit and therefore limit their own self-direction, their own self-unfolding. These “knew eyes” suggest that men (and other dominate groups and cultures) are more traumatized and denying of trauma, less likely to seek profound change, than women. Women, children and those marginalized within dominant culture are less invested in maintaining those structures of dominance. Women like the lantern makers who have gone through the disruptions and healing fires of s/Self transformation illuminate the processes necessary for such radical change.

Depathologising personal disruption and fostering self-transformational processes in transdisciplinary, creative ways means breaking out of the rigid “boxes” of singular western disciplines such as medical models. This implies transformation in psychotherapeutic praxis. Imagine centering interconnectedness *and* self direction, multi-contextual historical and relational analyses *and* personal embodied knowing, understandings of trauma *and* the joys of intimacy with *all* our relations rather than relying on culturally-embedded diagnostics and drugs. The Holding Flames project supports art and creative expression as part of s/Self-transformations, both personal and communal.

Art and artful inquiry are compassionate matrices for holding complex and paradoxical understandings in ways that can be seen and slowly unpacked over time. They enable multi-local and indigenous knowledges to participate not only amongst diverse cultures, communities and peoples but also amongst fragmented and conflictual parts of s/Self, personal and collective. Creative expression is generally challenging to rigidity, re-

petitive ideas and hegemony.

Being in the wilds, in closeness with the natural world after the communal experience with the lanterns and the Shadow Box, inspired and called out my own indigenous vision. Creative expression of that vision in inter-relating water-colours and collages were again revealing. The circles of s/Self-transformation arising from being present with the clearing revealed the participatory, multi-local and indigenous interweavings of my own story, the story of the Holding Flames exhibit and of the research process. Their emergence grounded and shaped the illuminations from the lanterns in section three, the current thesis writing and my future actions.

There are circles within circles, spirals that move in invisible but necessary connection with other spirals. Without the Holding Flames Exhibit, my own moments of s/Self-transforming would not have emerged. Without my personal s/Self-transforming pieces, the multi-local, participatory and indigenous nature of s/Self-transformations amongst the lantern-makers would not be visible. True, without my 30 years of learning around self transformation with other women in therapy, within my personal therapy and within my wide scholarly, political and social activist interests, that three-fold heuristic might not have emerged. It is also true that without the supportive community of the other lantern makers, my own processes of “sitting in the fire and eating the shadow” would not have reached fruition in this manuscript. Without art, without human contact with creation, neither the lantern-makers’ intergenerational wisdom nor my own would have been seen in all their light and shadow. Committing to the strength of art, to art as epistemology, (i.e., learning to trust the artful inquiry process), decolonises my spirit. It reconnects me with my early Irish roots, stills my modernist pace to self-reflection, enlivens my womanly body and rekindles the sense of sacred Earth relationship that runs under all of these.

The most dramatic evidence of my personal transformation after the

completion of the *s*/Self-transforming pieces was my decision to stop. In the year until fall 2003, I completed my course work and proposal, and wrote a section on the participatory turn in my awareness begun in that clearing and heightened in daily meditation practice. What was ironic was that the writing was so non-participatory, so betraying of my newfound sense of my own rooted vision, that I could no longer write until I could write from a more integral place or state. The involvement in the Holding Flames Exhibit and the personal art installations had flowed from that more integral state. As a group of us met in November to discuss putting on “Spirit Matters: A Gathering of Leaders of Wisdom Traditions” I made a conscious² decision to do nothing on the final presentation of the doctoral project until I could do so in a wholistic way. I needed to *be* rather than to *do*, in ways more authentic to my re-fired self. Becoming the person responsible for making artful this gathering of peoples involved in the Great Work of renegotiating human-Earth relationship was a way to embody the fire.

Seasonal Renewal

Jorge Ferrer, Maria Romero and Ramon Albareda (2004) writing on integral education within a participatory approach speak of the “Four Seasons of Integral Education.” They point out that academic programmes and deadlines rarely take into account that a creative process usually unfolds through general stages that correspond roughly with the seasonal cycles of nature. Fall is the time of action (preparing the terrain and planting the seeds; studying what is already known about the area), winter involves “germination/gestation, rooting and nourishment of the seed inside the earth; the vital, conception of novel developments in contact with unconscious transpersonal and archetypal sources” (2004, p. 7), spring is the season of blooming, of new growth emerging into the light, and summer is the time for harvesting the ripe fruits of the creative process. Many

creative projects may move through two or more of such cycles; it took three seasonal encirclings of the lanterns, guest book, personal art installations and related literatures for this thesis to come to fruition.

The final wintering, blooming and harvesting of my creative process was fostered by the extraordinary physical, erotic and spiritual energies called forth by involvement in the “Spirit Matters” gathering. While it might appear on the surface that nothing was happening on the doctoral project over the nine months from November 2003 to August 2004, the circles of transformation that shape my work in this next and final phase of my life, were emerging from that deep contact with transpersonal and archetypal sources.

Spirit Matters: A Participatory Event at Multi-local Levels

The Gathering itself involved nearly 400 participants from over 50 countries, many as far away as Africa, Brazil and India. It took place over four days in May and was the culmination of collaborative weekly planning meetings with a committee³ of eight other women and one man, all involved in overlapping networks in transformative learning, ecofeminism, transpersonal psychology, indigenous education, women’s spirituality, peace studies, cultural interchange and art. This was a self-organizing group that formed the matrix out of which the innovative processes of the Gathering emerged.

It was not just that this was a once-in-a-lifetime bringing together of visionaries like Vandana Shiva, bell hooks, Ursula Franklin, Oren Lyons, John Mohawk, David Abram, Michael Lerner, Mary Evelyn Tucker, Satish Kumar, Matthew Fox, Marion Woodman and so many other well-known names. It was that these were people who chose to come together to converse deeply in front of and with participants rather than be distanced by familiar conference structures and payment. The inner city setting in a ’60s-style building was uninspiring but the whole event was vivid with

music, ritual, dance and story drawn from multiple traditions and cultures. Full description of the event is beyond this writing; Appendix D gives but a glimpse. Here are personal notes on some of my own highlights scribbled between acting as a member of the committee and as the host between sessions.

The Gathering opened formally with three ceremonies hosted by First Nations peoples. Women from Six Nations Reserve in Brantford opened with drumming and chanting thanks to Creation. This brought energy right into our bones. In a traditional pipe ceremony, the most sacred of Aboriginal prayers, Herb Nabigon offered smoke to the four directions, to the universe and to Mother Earth.

Water is the source of life. Participants had been asked in advance to bring vials of water from their home places. At the end of the pipe ceremony, participants moved in slow procession to empty their water into a communal fountain that stayed on the stage throughout the Gathering. On the final day, those who wished took that communal water home to their own places where the Source surfaces. It was simple and it brought me to tears as I walked with educator Ann Fitzgerald from Ireland with her container of waters from our homeland and my vial from Little Ireland near the clearing.

Imagine being the facilitator for conversation between bell hooks, Marion Woodman, Vandana Shiva and Cindy White of Six Nations! The first plenary session was on "The Feminine and the Great Work," with images from the Newgrange mounds, the teaching rocks of Petroglyph Park in Ontario and of moving waters and seeds around the planet as the background of our talk. To sit with these Mothers of my spirit and speak of women's holding of the knowledge of embodied and Earth life, was learning such as I had never had before. Having cups of tea and talk with them over the days that followed was a whole other teaching in the mundane and the Mystery.

There was awe and excitement in the buzz of talk around the art exhibits, demonstrations and installations that fill the second floor of the building

where food for the body and the spirit were to be found. I have my three circles of s/Self-transforming on display for the first time in the largest room where other artists sculpt, carve, embroider and paint as well as talk about their pieces. Nine of the artists involved are lantern-makers. This makes it more homelike. After the closing ceremonies, most of the 22 artists displaying meet in a spontaneous sharing circle to commit to ongoing connection and the doing of art for Earth's sake.

I attend a workshop on connecting with the ancestors led by an educator trained by Malidome Some (1994). I decided to participate at the last moment after again finding myself in tears yet again during Paola Wangoola's libation ceremony. Pouring water on the ground to honour those who have gone before us is such a familiar tradition from Africa. Meeting my own ancestors in the workshop is fraught. I only connect consciously with the women in my line. I have so distanced myself from the male ancestors that I keep forgetting the simple chant associated with their approach. I know I have work to do. These men too are in my bones. One core piece of that work of embodied reconnection with the past is clearer when Paolo invites me, and five others on the committee, to Africa, to the Multiversity he founded in Uganda for a conference on indigenous knowledges in June 2004. To return for the first time since childhood to Africa? I am terrified and excited. I have always believed I will die if I return. Then again maybe this is the time, the place, the context and the company in which the healing of that wounded part of myself is possible.

The finale of the Gathering is wild. We are all dancing to the Samba Band, each moving in our own style to the same complex rhythms that enervate us all.

Return to the Source

By June 2004, I am in Africa. We go first to Uganda, to Jinja, a town right on the Source of the Nile. We are on the shore of a lake on a plain, on the

shore of Lake Victoria where the first skulls labeled as “human” were found. Uganda, held previously in my mind with film footage of the rescue of hostages from Entebbe, is so green, so beautiful and so full of birds. Storks strut taller than I am over every compost heap. Kingfishers swoop in iridescence from the cliffs that border the fish-filled waters of the lake. Tiny hummingbirds feed on the trumpet flowers of hibiscus, morning glory and bouganvillea.

Paolo’s conference brought us to meet educators from many countries in Africa, men and women as colourful and as vibrant as the birds. The Kundalini Sisters⁴ from Canada presented in a learning circle that demonstrated the links between our personal histories, our educational



The original Kundalini Sisters, from left to right, Njoki Wane, Eimear O'Neill, Renee Shilling, Maliha Chisti and Natalie Zur Neddin

work and our shared connections with Earth-based spirituality. All of the women in the audience responded. We spent the days of the conference in impromptu parties, intense conversations and exchange of clothes! We also began to talk with both men and women about the possibilities of an

international indigenous education network that would pool and support knowledges and educational initiatives like the conservation of indigenous languages and resources across institutions and international boundaries.

From Uganda, we went to Kenya, and through the auspices of the Kenyan member of the Kundalini Sisters and the Transformative Learning Centre, we visited not only the tourist havens of Nairobi and the animal-filled plains of the Masai Mara, but the villages around the central highlands that have been devastated by AIDs and polluted waters. Those of us who shared that journey are still working through its implications. What I know for myself is that seeing young girls of 13 or 14 caring for three of four siblings, many of them disabled, moved me to action that is connected to my current status as a white middle-class adult educator with resources and to my childhood self, vulnerable, overly responsible and bereft of parents. Those of us who traveled together in Africa are still planning how to link up resourceful elders here in North America with the children from Embu and other parts of Africa who fall outside AIDs’ projects and deserve our support.

Returning to Africa for the first time since age 12 was a totally unexpected joy. The fear was gone when my feet touched the soil and the sounds, smells and energy of the peoples was felt again. I was home. Being adopted into a Kenyan family with my Kundalini Sisters was an unexpected honour and homecoming. To come back to where one consciously began is a whole new beginning.

To fly straight from Africa back to Ireland for a week before the return to Canada, was to complete the circle. I left memories and states in Africa that needed to be left behind. I left other weighty things in Ireland. I placed a headstone on my father’s grave engraved with the triple spiral heuristic to this writing. I wished him peace. Alone, I drove to the Valley of the Boyne to place soil, incense and a feather from Africa in one entrance to the mounds. I also placed three local stones in Knowth, the last mound to be excavated, remembering the three circles of s/Self Trans-

forming, the three themes of the multi-local, participatory and indigenous nature of s/Self transformations revealed in the Holding Flames research and my own journey from Africa to Ireland to Canada, from child to adult to crone.

Circling into the Open: Unfolding

The collage that opens and ends this project and this epilogue, celebrates another layer in terms of human-Earth re-connections.

The Holding Flames Exhibit is now out in the open, in the wilds, joining with Earth's vivid celebration of seasonal death and renewal through its membraned walls.

Out in full light, the Holding Flames Exhibit has sparked other meaningful artful, ecological and indigenous projects. Suzanne Anderson (Anderson & Cannon, 2003) from the Women's Crucible Leadership Project at Antioch University is considering a similar project to tap into what fosters integration of the "feminine and masculine" styles of leadership and meaning-making. A local scholar-activist for homeless peoples



Collage, Holding Flames Exhibit, Shadow Box and s/Self Transforming Installations against the sky of Little Ireland, Ontario

plans to use boxes to access and free their knowledge of what constitutes safe and dangerous homeplaces. A man, a mature doctoral student from Iran attending a talk on the lanterns, dreams of boxes covered in the decorative arts of his homeland and ablaze. He tells how this inspires his work toward more unabashed revelation of its own indigenous roots. My proposal for community-based therapist training modeled on the sharing circles and diverse participants mentioned in section 8 and developed using the illuminations on s/Self transformation from this research, will weave creative expression through every phase of the process. There is active ongoing web connection with other scholartists on using small accessible installation spaces that are ecological, sustainable and public. The artist group around art for Earth's sake continues to meet. A recent meeting of the Kundalini Sisters on the land where the s/Self transforming installation emerged, discussed the possibilities of that land becoming a nature conservancy and a place for meetings of the fledgling international indigenous education network.

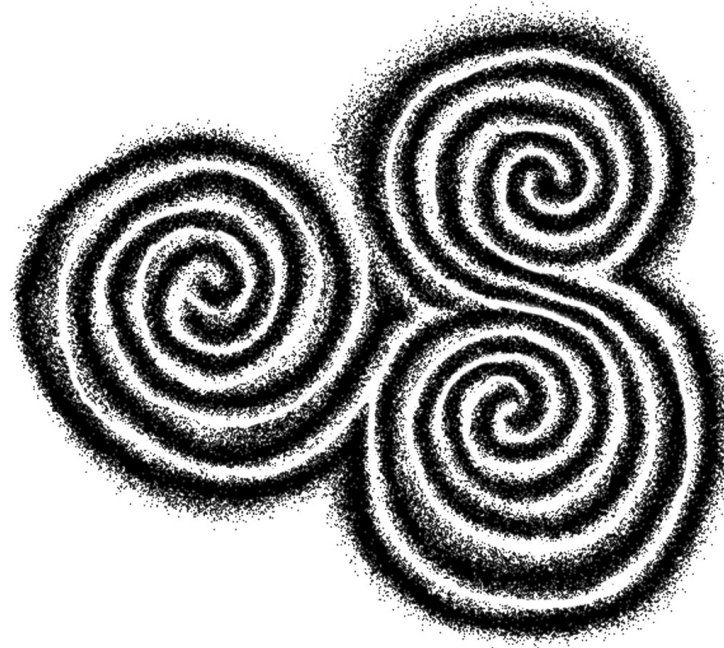
Public witnessing of the joys and painful tensions of women's s/Self transformations, held artfully, has met some of the political intentions of this project. It moves guests and helps them recognize their own struggles toward self governance in compassionate creative ways. Lantern-makers speak of what they see and re-vision over time. Some now work with me on the other projects arising after the exhibit and mentioned above.

Being participant, curator and researcher in Holding Flames opened the door to my own healing and a return toward the participatory and Earth-based spirituality of my ancestors and my multiple communities.

The words of Oriah Mountain Dreamer (2005) from her latest book "What We Ache For: Creativity and the Unfolding of Your Soul," are fitting ending for this project and fitting beginning to the next.

We ache to touch intimately what is real, to find the marriage of meaning and matter in our lives and in the world. We ache to

feel and express the fire of being fully alive. When we cultivate and refuse to separate those essential expressions of a human soul-our spirituality, sexuality and creativity-we feed the fire of our being, we find that place where the soul and the sensuous meet, we unfold. (p. 1)



¹Amergin, bard of the Milesians or Celts, calls the lands of Ireland into being as they approach to invade about 600-500 BCE, 4000 years after Newgrange was built, and 1000 years before Christian colonisation

²Making the conscious decision to stop writing was a very different and power reclaiming act after years of being blocked by those traumatized parts of myself.

³A full description of the committee, their creative processes, the Gathering itself and the interwoven learnings and projects arising from it, can be found in Edmund O'Sullivan, Marilyn Daniels, Anne Goodman and

Heather Reid's manuscript, *"Circles of Transformation: Finding Our Place in the Great Work"* (2004) available on the Gathering website www.tlc.oise.utoronto.ca/conf2004, and in a DVD to be released summer 2005. The Gathering schedule and excerpts from Sue McGregor's (2004) paper which draws on Spirit Matters as an example of a creative transdisciplinary event, form Appendix D.

⁴A group of women from very different spiritual traditions had met in Little Ireland in that fall of 2003 to talk, eat, swim and meditate together. From Ireland, Kenya, Eriterea, French Canada, Pakistan and Curve Lake Anishnabe Reserve, we are connected by our Earthed spirituality and our social, political and ecological activism.

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Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

Appendix D

Appendix E